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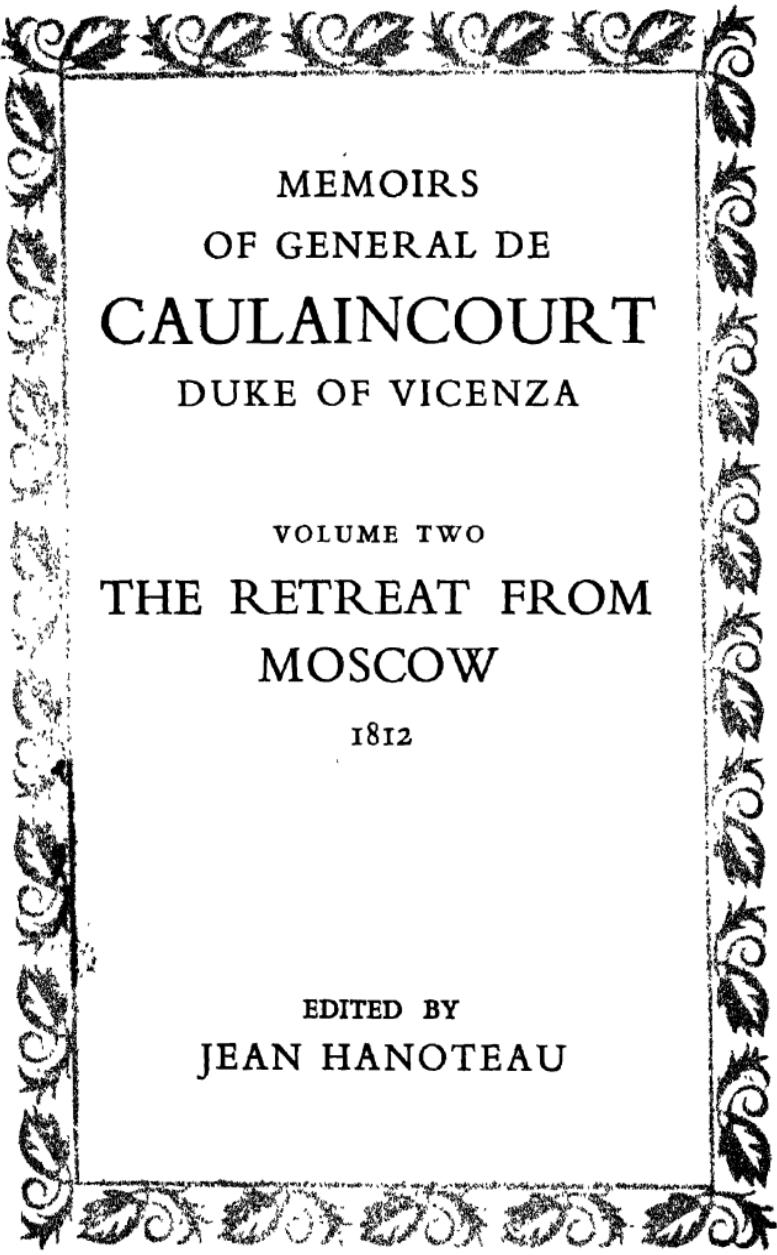
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MEMOIRS
OF GENERAL DE
CAULAINCOURT
DUKE OF VICENZA

VOLUME TWO
THE RETREAT FROM
MOSCOW

1812

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THE DUKE OF VICENZA

ARMAND DE CAULAINCOURT, whose account of the Retreat from Moscow is presented in this volume, was the son of an ancient manorial family of Picardy. On the outbreak of the Revolution his father threw in his lot with the new regime, and was soon promoted lieutenant-general in the Army of the Republic.

In 1799, at the age of twenty-three, Armand was gazetted to the command of the 2nd Carabiniers, and with them saw action under Moreau in the campaign of the Rhine. His military career was, however, cut short in 1801, when the First Consul chose him as the bearer of a personal letter to the Tsar. On Caulaincourt's return from Russia he was appointed one of the eight aides-de-camp to Napoleon.

On assuming the imperial crown Napoleon made Caulaincourt Master of the Horse. This was no sinecure as he was not only responsible for the Imperial stables and the Emperor's personal mounts, but had to organize and maintain the intricate courier system by which Napoleon kept in touch with Paris and the world while on his various campaigns and journeys. In 1807, however, he was appointed ambassador extraordinary to Tsar Alexander I. He remained in Moscow until 1811, becoming an intimate friend of the Tsar and gaining a thorough knowledge of social and political conditions in Russia. Napoleon showed appreciation of his services by creating him Duke of Vicenza in 1808.

His ambassador's knowledge of the country was put to use by Napoleon when he embarked on the ill-fated invasion of Russia in 1812. Caulaincourt's unhesitating frankness and criticisms of the plan of campaign—indeed of the campaign itself—however much it irritated the Emperor, undoubtedly influenced his actions, and when, after the burning of Moscow (as narrated in Volume I of these Memoirs) he was forced to retreat, it was Caulaincourt whom he kept by his side and selected to bear him company on his hurried return to Paris.

take good care of him. It was the patience and control of this young man which saved him.¹ Two days later I was able by good fortune to bring him again into the company of M. de Mailly, son of the Marshal and wounded in the same encounter.² We brought him to Wilna, and from there they returned safely to Paris.

We slept at the manor-house of Troitskoie³ and stayed there during the whole of the 20th for better concentration, many men and transports having fallen behind. It was here the Emperor finally decided to abandon Moscow, being forced to this by the losses incurred at Woronovo, the reports of the state of our cavalry, and the realization that the Russians would not come to terms. He was still determined, however, to attack Kutusoff; and to that end he quickened the movement of troops. It was his intention, if his success were such as he hoped, to push beyond Kalouga and destroy the ordnance establishment at Toula, which was the most important in all Russia: and in any case to direct his forces upon Smolensk, which he wished to make his principal outpost. The Duke of Treviso was ordered to evacuate Moscow on the 23rd if he did not in the meantime receive other orders. And he was to make ready for blowing up the Kremlin and the

¹ His thigh, which had been broken by the thrust of a lance, was set at Troitskoie on October 20th, by Yvan, the Emperor's surgeon. "He bore the operation with great courage." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 173.)

² Adrien-Auguste-Almaric de Mailly-Nesle, born at Paris, February 19, 1792, died at the château of La Roche-Mailly (Sarthe) on July 1, 1878. He was the son, not of the Marshal de Mailly, but of Major-General de Mailly-Nesle, who was a deputy to the Estates General. On leaving St. Cyr in 1811 he had been appointed sub-lieutenant in the 2nd Regiment of Carabiniers. After his return to France, he was orderly officer to General Durosnel, then to the Duc de Feltre, and lastly, at the time of the Restoration, aide-de-camp to the Duc de Berry. He was made a peer of France on August 17, 1815, but in 1830 he refused the oath to Louis-Philippe and ceased to sit in the Chamber.

³ "A mean manor-house," says Castellane (*Journal*, I, 173). It is on the road from Moscow to Kalouga.

barracks.¹ The King of Naples reported that the Russians, having themselves suffered notable losses at Winkovo, had made no energetic pursuit of him as far as the Motscha: and that Kutusoff was withdrawn within his entrenchments at Taroutino. A few days later these reports were fully confirmed.² Several detachments of Cossacks appeared on our flank, but did not venture to cross our line of march.

I had made arrangements, by sending out detachments, so that the couriers from Paris should come direct to us from the second relay station before Moscow. The Cossacks, however, controlled that point and delayed the couriers, so that none reached us for three days. As usual, this worried and annoyed the Emperor more than I can express. On the second day he said to me:

"I see it will be absolutely essential to be in closer touch with my reserves. I will be useless to drive off Kutusoff and force him to evacuate Kalouga and his entrenchments: the Cossacks will still interfere with my communications so long as I haven't my Poles."

In this connection the Emperor complained of the action of M. de Bassano and M. de Pradt, sparing neither. Against the first he brought up the Russo-Turkish peace and the Swedish alliance; and attributing all his present difficulties, and any that might arise from them, to the lack of foresight, the incompetence, and the negligence of his minister and ambassador. The Emperor expressed the same view to the Prince of Neuchâtel, and also reverted to the topic with me, on our way to the manor of Ignatiëwo,³ where we spent the night of the 21st.

Both these conversations led me to think that the Emperor had at last realized the absolute necessity of retreat, although

¹ *Correspondance de Napoléon*, No. 19292: Napoleon to Berthier, Troitskoie, October 20, 1812. The fire was to be started, according to this order, on the 22nd or 23rd, at two in the morning.

² Principally by Colonel Berthemey, who had carried to Kutusoff the letter from Berthier mentioned earlier, and had found him still holding his position at Taroutino. Berthemey had returned to the Imperial quarters on the 22nd.

³ Between the two roads from Moscow to Kalouga.

he would not yet admit that he had decided on it. He still wavered, and some compelling force or irresistible fatality inclined him still to regret Moscow, and to go back there, buoying himself up with the hope of some conspicuous success and an armistice, or negotiations, by which everything could be settled. So at least I suspected from what the Prince of Neuchâtel told me and from the dispositions made on the 22nd, the day on which the headquarters were established at Fominskoie.¹ The weather was bad and the ground so sodden with rain that we had great difficulty in making Borowsk in two marches across country.² The draught horses were finished, the cold of the night being too much for them. We already had to abandon a number of ammunition-cases and transports. It was on the evening of the previous day that the Prince of Neuchâtel told me how for the first time the Emperor, in discussing the army, its movements, and the possible issues, made no reference to his former project: the project of holding Moscow while we occupied the fertile province of Kalouga, as the Emperor called it. This province must have been the apparent rather than the real object of our expedition; for, in the reflections he was led to make, in talking with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself, by the delay of the couriers, there was as yet no indication of a settled plan.

Although he had already, on the 20th, sent an order to the Duke of Treviso to be in motion by the 23rd, and to move towards Mojaïsk, it was really the losses incurred in the march on Borowsk, the cold of the night, and the manifest plight of his cavalry and artillery, which opened his eyes and completely decided him that he must evacuate Moscow. Meanwhile the Emperor continued to direct all his forces against Kutusoff, who was withdrawn, as I said, within his entrenchments at Taroutino and learned of our movements only on the 23rd.

¹ On the road from Moscow to Kalouga by Borowsk. The Emperor arrived at Fominskoie on the 22nd, an hour after midday and remained there until nine on the morning of the 23rd.

² The Emperor, in order to conceal his movements from Kutusoff, had decided to cross from the old road to Kalouga on to the new by using a road running diagonally. Borowsk is on the new road, which runs also through Malo-Jaroslawetz.

The Emperor was more than ever set upon driving Kutusoff from his position and forcing him to an engagement, not wishing it to be thought that the unfortunate skirmish at Winkovo had compelled him to retire. At no matter what cost, there must be some incident in the bulletin to balance the defeat of the King of Naples and prevent Kutusoff from flattering himself that our retreat was the immediate consequence.

The belated couriers arrived,¹ but only to inform us that a body of Cossacks, together with a great number of peasants armed and organized as a militia, were cutting off our communications beyond Ghjat: and that the range of this complication appeared to be spreading. A month earlier I had directed the officer in command of each relay post to make a note of what was going on in his district on the covering sheet of the despatches, where the time of arrival and departure were always entered. These reports from the road I passed to the Emperor daily, and he used to read them before anything else. At this time they indicated movements of peasants and the presence of Cossacks at every stage; and they made a great impression on the Emperor, who said to me, as early as the 21st:

"We shall be without news from France: but the worst of it is that France will have no news of us."

He instructed me to advise anyone writing home to write with great discretion on account of the risks of transit.

The Emperor reached Borowsk on the 23rd. This town had suffered severely. In spite of the very bad weather, in the afternoon he reconnoitred the neighbourhood of the town and the banks of the river² for a good distance out. He was on the point of setting out on a further advance, in accordance with the information he received of the enemy's movements, when a further report decided him to stay there. It was not until the 24th that he went forward, in the morning, to within a quarter of a league of Malo-Jaroslawetz where Delzons's

¹ The auditor, Joly de Fleury, bringing the portfolio from Paris, reached the Emperor on the evening of the 21st, at Ignatiwko.

² The river Protwa.

division had been fighting since daybreak against Doctorov's corps.¹ While waiting for the arrival of the Viceroy, Delzons accomplished marvels. The Viceroy hurried to his support as soon as he knew how much superior the forces were by which he was engaged; but Delzons was killed in the midst of his men.²

General Guilleminot³ took his place and again joined battle. Like the experienced soldier he was, he occupied and fortified a church and two houses which flanked our defence and which prevented the Russians, although they were greatly superior in numbers, from passing beyond those points in their different attacks. These fortifications gave Broussier's division,⁴ the

¹ On the 23rd Napoleon had sent Prince Eugène to Borowsk, with Delzons's, Broussier's and Pino's divisions, the Italian Royal Guard, and Grouchy's cavalry. Eugène sent Delzons's (13th) division forward to Malo-Jaroslawetz. Arriving in the neighbourhood very late, Delzons found the bridge over the Luja cut, and put two battalions across to the other bank to occupy the town. On the morning of the 24th, Doctorov attacked these two battalions and dislodged them. Delzons crossed the now mended bridge and entered Malo. Doctorov returned to the attack and broke Delzon's division, which was driven back. It was at this point that the General was killed with three bullets. The fight swayed back again on the entry of Broussier's division. Malo-Jaroslawetz was taken and re-taken seven times by the French, in whose hands it ultimately remained, thanks to a final charge by Pino's division and the Italian Royal Guard.

² Alexis-Joseph Delzons, born at Aurillac on March 26, 1775, entered the army as a volunteer in the Aurillac National Guard on June 30, 1791. He was given the command of a brigade on April 27, 1801, and of a division on February 15, 1811.

³ Armand Charles Guilleminot, born at Dunkirk (Nord) on March 2, 1774, died at Bade on March 14, 1840. He was made second-lieutenant on July 23, 1792, and Brigadier-General on July 19, 1808. He was not appointed to a division until May 28, 1813. During the Russian campaign he had been appointed Chief-of-Staff to Prince Eugène. In 1815 he was Chief-of-Staff to the Duc de Berry, then after the second restoration, Chief-of-Staff to Davout, and, in 1823, to the Duc d'Angoulême. He was made a peer of France on October 9, 1823, and Ambassador to Constantinople from 1824-31. After the death of Delzons, Eugène sent Guilleminot to take command of the 13th Division.

⁴ 14th Division (4th Army).

leading division of the 4th Army, time to come up and relieve him. At the same time Kutusoff's advance-guard came up with Doctorov, and the fresh troops put in on both sides not only made the engagement brisker but turned it into a battle. The 4th Army held its ground gallantly, in spite of the advantages of the Russian position, which dominated all our attacking points. In addition they were greatly superior to us in numbers and artillery. The Italians decided the day in our favour, rivalling the French in daring; and there was need of this gallant rivalry for overcoming all our difficulties. In the end, however, we held the town and the strategic points.

The Emperor, who arrived by eleven o'clock, ordered the Prince of Eckmühl to quicken his march and move to the right of Prince Eugène, whom the Guard were also ordered to support. The 1st Army went into the line about two o'clock. We could see perfectly the movements of the Russians, and expected that Kutusoff would take full advantage of his very strong position¹ to block our advance and himself take the offensive; but in the event the 4th Army was enough. Davout was hardly engaged. We had at least 4000 men put out of action, and a remarkable number of Russians were killed. That night and the following day, together with the Emperor, I went over the battle-ground most carefully.

Some Cossacks appeared that evening on the right of Ghorodnia, where headquarters had been established.² They were thought to be a party that were out of their road and would blunder into our outposts. We paid less attention to them than we might have done, because about noon in the same district, but on the left of the road, we had chased off some new Cossacks wearing crosses on their caps. They were mounted troops founded on the model of the Don Cossacks,

¹ "Malo-Jaraslawetz stands on heights at the foot of which the River Luja runs through a marshy bed. The French, coming from Moscow, had to cross the river, then climb the heights, and maintain themselves in Malo-Jaroslavetz. The Russians, marching on the other side of the river, had merely to enter the town." (*Tbiers*, XIV, 476.)

² They were in a weaver's hut near the main road from Moscow to Kalouga.

and named after the provinces that provided them. The general opinion was that Kutusoff might have better defended his position. For our part, we had to leave it in the hands of a small rear-guard.

We blamed him for sacrificing a good number of men, only to be beaten in the end, and fail of his object. For since he defended his position, he must have intended to hold it at least till nightfall. The truth is that Kutusoff, having learnt of the Emperor's movements only on the 23rd, was taken by surprise; and the successive bodies of troops which arrived later to support Doctorov were only put into action to cover the retreat of his army upon Juchnow. For he was unwilling to run the risks of a pitched battle.

The Emperor heard these details on the following day from a staff officer of Doctorov's army who had been taken prisoner. We also learned from him that Doctorov was sent by Kutusoff to Borowsk on the 23rd; but as soon as he discovered our advance (he found us already in possession of Borowsk) he moved as fast as he could to Malo-Jaroslawetz. There again he found Delzon's division in possession; but it was too weak to resist him. Doctorov's movements seemed so hurried that Kutusoff's staff officers went to him one after another, urging him to make more haste. They said boldly that the Commander-in-Chief was receiving only the news of the French advance. This officer gave us many other particulars, even about the growing disinclination of Alexander for any negotiation, and about the orders he had given on that point. To the officer who brought him Kutusoff's first despatch, containing an account of M. de Lauriston's mission and proposals, he replied: "This is where my campaign begins." These particulars and others have been written in this journal under their own date.

Two army corps were drawn up beyond the town; but the roads were so broken up that only one section of the artillery had been able, and that with difficulty, to reach their position. The Emperor moved back to spend the night¹ in a hut near the bridge at Ghorodnia, a small hamlet one league from

¹ The night of 24-25 October, 1812.

Malo-Jaroslavetz. We were nearly all of us camped in the open. The Viceroy's success had not achieved our object. We held the field, but Kutusoff gave us the slip. Our situation was therefore unchanged; and the army was not in a position to pursue the enemy. Moreover, the time of year did not allow of any further delay in the plan of settling into winter quarters. It was more than ever essential to come to some decision.

The Emperor spent the night in receiving reports, issuing orders, and, on this occasion, discussing his difficulties with the Prince of Neuchâtel. He sent for me several times, and also for Duroc and the Duke of Istria, and discussed matters with us, but without reaching any decision. Should he follow Kutusoff, who, having abandoned an impregnable position, had probably eluded us? And what route should he take to Smolensk if he did not find the enemy drawn up beyond Malo-Jaroslavetz? He had to make up his mind; and the course which drew the Emperor away from his enemy, whose measure he so much wanted to take, was always the one that came hardest to him.

An hour before daybreak¹ the Emperor sent for me again. We were alone. He seemed very much preoccupied, and he seemed to need the relief of giving vent to the thoughts which lay so heavy on him.

"Things are getting serious," he said. "I beat the Russians every time, and yet never reach an end."

After a quarter of an hour of silence, during which he walked to and fro in his small shelter, the Emperor went on:

"I'm going to find out for myself whether the enemy are drawing up for battle, or whether they are retreating, as everything suggests. That devil Kutusoff will never join battle! Fetch the horses, let's be off!"

As he spoke he picked up his hat to go. The Duke of Istria and the Prince of Neuchâtel, who luckily happened to enter just as the Emperor was going, joined me in persuading him to agree to wait until dawn. They pointed out that it was very dark, and he would reach the outposts before it was light

¹ October 25th.

enough to see; and that, as the Guard had taken up their positions by night, no one was certain where the corps lay.

The Emperor, however, was resolved upon going, until one of the Viceroy's aides-de-camp arrived to announce that nothing could be seen of the enemy but the fires of some Cossacks; and that some peasants and soldiers who had just been taken confirmed the news of their retreat. These particulars decided the Emperor to wait; but half an hour later his impatience drove him to start. Dawn was hardly showing, and three-quarters of a mile from headquarters we found ourselves face to face with some Cossacks, belonging to a troop of which the greater part, who were ahead of us, set upon an artillery park where they heard some guns moving. They carried off several pieces.

It was still so dark that we were warned only by their shouts, and were entangled with several before we could see them. It was so unexpected to find them among the lines where our Guard were bivouacked that (I must admit) we paid little heed to the first shouts. It was only when the shouting increased, and sounded very close to the Emperor, that General Rapp (who was ahead of him with Lauriston, Lobau, and Durosnel, the orderly officers on duty, and the advance-guard of the picket) came back to the Emperor crying:

"Halt, Sire! The Cossacks!"

"Take the chasseurs of the picket," he answered, "and go forward."

The chasseurs (only ten or twelve had so far joined us) were already moving forward unbidden to join the advance-guard. The light was still so poor that one could not see anything beyond twenty-five yards, and only the clash of arms and the shouts of the men fighting indicated the direction of the skirmish, or even the fact that we were at grips with the enemy.¹ M. Emmanuel Lecoutculx, the Prince of Neuchâtel's aide-de-camp on duty, had his chest pierced right through by a sabre-

¹ Cf. the account of this surprise in *Mémoires de Rapp*, 226, in the 27th Bulletin, Wercia, October 27, 1812: and in Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 330.

thrust from a trooper of the Guard who mistook him for a Russian.¹

The Emperor was left alone with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself. All three of us held our swords in our hands. As the fighting was very near, and shifting closer towards him, the Emperor decided to move off several yards, on to the crest of the rise, so as to see better. At this moment the remaining chasseurs of the picket caught up with us; and the squadrons in attendance, to whom the Emperor had not given time to mount horse before he set out, came up immediately after. Guided by the shouts of those already engaged, the first two squadrons to arrive charged and broke up the foremost Cossacks. The two other squadrons, who were close behind, headed by the Duke of Istria, came up in time to support the first two, who were hard pressed and surrounded by a swarm of the enemy. By this time daylight was near enough to light up the scene. The plain and the road were alive with Cossacks. The Guard recaptured the guns and the few artillerymen in the enemy's hands, and forced the Cossacks to recross the river; but we were left with many wounded.

It is clear that if the Emperor had set out, as he had wished, before dawn, he would have found himself in the midst of this

¹ "In the impetuous charge of our Grenadiers, Captain Lecouteulx was attacked and wounded as an enemy at the very moment that he had just killed a Cossack. It was through the green top-coat he was wearing over his uniform as aide to the Prince of Neuchâtel that the blow was misdirected." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 250.)

M. de Caulaincourt must be mistaken in saying that M. de Lecouteulx's chest was pierced through, for he survived his wound.

Charles Emmanuel de Lecouteulx de Canteleu, born in 1790, was made a captain on October 18, 1812, later reached the rank of colonel, and did not die till June 12, 1844, at Versailles.

Denniée, *Itinéraire*, III, is probably more exact when he says: "It was in this skirmish that Emmanuel Lecouteulx, aide-de-camp to the Prince of Neuchâtel, armed himself with a lance snatched from one of the Cossacks: whereupon a mounted grenadier of the Guard, deceived by his appearance, pursued him in turn, and wounded him with a sword-thrust. By a miracle, the blade went under his collar-bone without damage to the artery."

swarm of Cossacks with only his picket and the eight Generals and officers who accompanied him. If the Cossacks, who came face to face with us and at one moment surrounded us, had shown more courage and fallen upon our route silently, instead of shouting and clattering at the side of the road, we should have been carried off before the squadron could rescue us. Doubtless we should have sold our lives as dearly as one can by wielding light swords in the dark, hitting out blindly. But the Emperor would certainly have been either killed or captured. No one would even have known where to look for him, in a wide plain dotted all over with clumps of trees under cover of which the Cossacks had been able to hide within musket-shot of the road and the Guard.

If these details had not the confirmation of the army and of so many trustworthy men, they might be called in question. And how, indeed, could anyone suppose that a man of such foresight, a sovereign, and the greatest commander of all time, could have been in danger of capture five hundred yards from his headquarters, on a high road, the route of march of the whole army, and among the bivouacs of a considerable guard of both cavalry and infantry? Is it credible that a thousand men could have lain in ambush and passed the night within the range of three or four musket-shots from our headquarters without being discovered? But this is all explained and proved by the following particulars, which I have summarized with care as being illustrative of the Emperor's habits.

We had very few light-armed troops left. They had not been spared, and were sorely harassed; and since they had been sent that same day to other points, this section of our position was poorly covered. In general our men fought well but kept a poor look-out. In no army were the duties of reconnaissance so neglected. At nightfall they set up a few sentry-posts indifferently placed, so as to have time to mount before the enemy could arrive; but they seldom troubled to cover rear or flank.

The Emperor only selected his headquarters at the last moment. Two considerations had led him to form this habit: first, a measure of wise prudence; and second, the advantage

of having all of his resources at his call until the very end of the day, and so keeping everyone on the alert.

He used sometimes to say to me: "If you make everything difficult, the really hard things seem less so."

The fact that officers and men sometimes undoubtedly suffered from these practices did not trouble the Emperor, who looked only to the main result and, being in the midst of his army and of a considerable guard, gave little thought to the organization of detail. Still intent on the offensive, he failed to notice the trouble which the Cossacks gave us now that the odds were against us.

The Guard had been in advance throughout the day, and so were obliged to fall back later on in order to take up position. Not having bivouacked until after dark, they did not themselves know where they were, or what was the lie of the land, but must have thought themselves still in the midst of the army. They put out no patrols. They were easy in the belief that the rest of the troops were covering the headquarters from a distance, and did not trouble even to make contact with them. In fact, the Guard and the headquarters took no account of anything going on outside their own area. One battalion of the Guard was bivouacked barely three hundred yards from the spot, on the same side of the road, where the Cossacks had spent the night and from which they came upon the Emperor.

By night or by day, the Emperor would mount his horse without warning: he even took pleasure in going out unexpectedly and putting everyone at fault. His saddle-horses were divided into troops. Each troop consisted of two horses for himself, one for the Master of the Horse, and as many as were necessary for the other officers on duty with the Emperor. Throughout the whole twenty-four hours there was always one troop of horses saddled and bridled. Every officer had also to have a horse bridled; and the picket on duty, which consisted of an officer and twenty light horse was always saddled and bridled. The squadrons in attendance provided and relieved the picket. On the other campaigns there was one squadron in attendance, but on the

Russian there were four—half light cavalry and half grenadiers and dragoons. The picket never left the Emperor. The squadrons followed in echelon, and saddled when the Emperor called for his horses. As he did so in haste and without warning, he always set out with only two or three other persons; the remainder caught up. After Moscow, and indeed after Smolensk, the same squadrons remained in attendance for two or three days running: both men and horses were worn out. The Emperor usually returned to his quarters very late, when it was quite dark. The squadrons in attendance bivouacked as best they could, hurriedly and in the dark. When the Emperor mounted his horse in the field he usually set out at the gallop, if only for two or three hundred yards. However keen and alert they were, therefore, it was difficult for a troop to be actually alongside him from the very start. This explains how the Emperor came to be almost alone at one moment on the day of this scuffle.

The Prince of Neuchâtel and I were always close to the Emperor's horse. The General commanding the Guards in attendance¹ rode at our side, but during the Russian campaign they all had other commands, and the Master of the Horse then took their place by right. When mounted, we rode in the following order: an advance-guard of four light horse, three orderly officers, two to four aides-de-camp—this group eighty paces forward—the Emperor: behind him the Master of the Horse, the Chief-of-Staff, and behind these several aides, if the Emperor so commanded, six staff officers from the Emperor's staff, two other aides-de-camp, and two officers attached to the Chief-of-Staff: then the officer and chasseurs constituting the picket: then, five hundred paces behind, the squadrons in attendance. If we were riding easily, they followed. If the Emperor galloped, they trotted. These details show how small the Emperor's escort was, and how wrong it is to suppose him surrounded by a bevy of troops, as some have asserted.

¹ There were four Generals commanding the Guards: Gouvion Saint-Cyr (cuirassiers), Eugène (chasseurs), Baraguay d'Hilliers (dragoons), and Junot (hussars).

As soon as the Emperor had a few men¹ around him he pushed forward. (He had already issued their orders to the squadrons in attendance and the rest of the Guard.) He went quickly forward to reconnoitre the enemy's position beyond Malo-Jaroslawetz. He made a very close inspection of the formidable defences which had been carried on the previous day, and realized with regret that the enemy had indeed retired and left only a few Cossacks behind. His first impulse was to follow Kutusoff, still hoping to force him into an engagement, but to take the road towards Krasnoë² instead of the one to Mojask through Borowsk, where part of the army was already stationed with a considerable number of guns which had been unable to follow the troops to which they were attached on to the field of battle. The Viceroy, the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Prince of Eckmühl pointed out how exhausting this change of direction would prove to cavalry and artillery already in a state of exhaustion: and that it would lose us any lead which we might have over the Russians.

The Emperor wavered for some time. The fight at Malo-Jaroslawetz was, in his opinion, not enough to counter-balance the defeat of the King of Naples. For the moment he wanted to put himself in the right about the attempt of that morning. It was only after long insistence on the consideration that Kutusoff, if he would not stand and fight in an excellent position such as at Malo-Jaroslawetz, was not at all likely to join battle twenty leagues further on, that we were able to persuade the Emperor, in this unofficial council, to take the road to Borowsk, where part of the troops, the greater part of the artillery, and all the carriages were already stationed. In view of the state of the horses, this last was a weighty consideration.

Did the Emperor wish it to seem that he was yielding only to the convictions of others? Or did he really believe that he might yet break the Russian Army and at last turn the whole

¹ Caulaincourt returns to his account of what happened on October 25th, after the set-to with the Cossacks.

² From Kalouga to Krasnoë through Yelnia.

campaign to his advantage before he decided on his winter quarters? I cannot say. But it is certain that the same question had been urgently presented to him during the night by some of the same people, and that he had resisted every conceivable argument brought forward to decide him. He merely postponed his decision until he could see for himself whether the enemy had really escaped him. It was for this reason that he wished to set out before dawn. After personally ascertaining the state of affairs in the van, the question was again debated. The Viceroy and the Prince of Eckmühl joined with the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Istria in persuading the Emperor; and, now that he was sure that Kutusoff had again escaped him, he did at last decide to move back along the road to Borowsk. He came back to Ghorodnia, and from there sent out his orders. Next day the army marched towards Borowsk, where the staff slept on the night of the 26th. A few inhabitants had returned to the town. It might be thought that when he left Moscow the Emperor had somehow anticipated the course of events, for he had ordered various precautionary measures against the Cossacks. But, as we have seen, they were unavailing. Nobody was used to keeping good guard, and men were too much disheartened and too exhausted to change their ways.

Every man's first thought on arrival was to find food for himself and his horses; and this could only be done by going off the main road, and so risking capture by Cossacks or murder by peasants. The marches were too hard, and the cavalry too few and exhausted, for adequate detachments to be sent out on reconnaissance or to cover our flanks. We minimized, as far as was possible, the risks run by the Emperor in the scuffle with the Cossacks, but within forty-eight hours the whole army knew the story; and the impression made was regrettable. This incident should have served as a warning to everyone, proving as it did our want of vigilance; but the lesson passed unnoted. At the same time it reflected no credit on the daring or courage of the Cossacks, who allowed themselves to be driven off, and yielded their gains to two or three hundred horsemen.

They are certainly the finest light troops in the world for guarding an army, scouting the countryside, or carrying out skirmishing sallies; but whenever we faced up to them, and marched against them boldly in a solid body, they never offered resistance, even when they outnumbered us by two to one. Attempt to attack them singly, or charge them in scattered formation, and one is lost. They turn back as quickly as they withdraw. Being better horsemen, and mounted on more responsive horses than ours, they can escape us when necessary or pursue us when it suits them. They spare their horses: they may sometimes race them, or set them to long and exacting rides, but they generally spare them the futile running to and fro by which we wear out our own.

On the 27th the Emperor passed the night at Wereia, to give the artillery and other wheeled traffic time to take the lead. Having started very early, he reached the town during the morning, passed straight through, and did not halt until he was half a league beyond, on the road to Mojaïsk, at the top of a rise overlooking the country round. Here he stayed to watch the troops and convoys pass; and there they brought him Lieutenant-General the Count Wintzingerode,¹ aide-de-camp to the Tsar. He had commanded a body of light troops stationed on the road to Tver in order to cover Petersburg and keep watch on Moscow, where he was taken prisoner.

As different accounts of this affair have been given since the war² I shall give here the particulars I noted down, from the reports made to the Emperor, at the time it took place. Having probably learnt that the French Army had gone,

¹ Ferdinand Charles Frederic Guillaume de Wintzingerode, born at Allendorf near Göttingen in Wurtemberg, on February 15, 1770, died at Wiesbaden on June 17, 1818. He had been one of the authors of the coalition of 1809.

² The account of the matter will be found in Fain, *Manuscrit de* 1812, II, 169 and 257; Denniéc, *Itinéraire*, 115; in Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 140 and 144; in Rapp, *Mémoires*, 228; in A. F. de B. Ch. (Beauchamp), *Histoire de la Destruction de Moscou en 1812*, who incorrectly states that Wintzingerode went to the Woskresenski gate for a parley.

M. de Wintzingerode, who was near Moscow, went into the suburbs and entered into talk with some of the inhabitants. Several slight attacks by the Cossacks or by armed peasants had forced the Duke of Treviso to draw in his small forces so as not to expose them to danger in that large city. Our troops being concentrated round the Kremlin, M. de Wintzingerode came disguised into the town as far as our outposts; and he conceived a hope of carrying out some military operation which should force the Duke of Treviso to evacuate, or else of achieving the same result by suborning our soldiers; which the inhabitants thought would be easy, as they believed the men to be discontented. Our troops were guarding only the Kremlin and our line of communications to Mojaïsk, which led also to the army. M. de Wintzingerode, wearing a civilian top-coat over his uniform, got into conversation with the soldiers at our furthest outpost. He was accompanied by several of the townspeople who also spoke French, and following his example or instructions, these men discussed informally with the soldiers in an unofficial manner, events recently experienced, the set-backs we had experienced, the privations ahead of us, the dangers we were uselessly running, the goodness and generosity of the Tsar Alexander, his kindness towards foreigners, his liking for soldiers, the uselessness of fighting now that the Emperor Napoleon was in retreat, how advantageous it would be to lay down arms and live in peace until the end of the war in a country so ready to welcome them, and so on.

Some of the soldiers, taking him for a plain townsman, let him run on without paying much heed to him or his talk. A more perspicacious hussar having heard some of his final remarks, kept him under observation. Shocked by his suggestions, he arrested him and took him to the guardroom;¹ from there, in spite of his protests and objections, he was taken before the officer in charge of the city. When he was

¹ See the account in Denni  , *Itin  raire*, 116, of Wintzingerode's conversation with the commandant of the outpost at Dwerkoe. This was the officer who arrested the General: a Lieutenant Leleu de Maupertuis, in the 5th Light Infantry of the Young Guard.

recognized as a Russian officer, he vainly tried to plead that he had come to parley. The story would not hold water. He was kept under arrest, and taken to the Duke of Treviso, who treated him with consideration, but as a prisoner of war, being unable to accept the pretence by which M. de Wintzingerode wished to extricate himself; for he had come secretly, in disguise, in an attempt to suborn our soldiers, and had not been announced by a trumpeter as an emissary. M. Narishkin,¹ son of the Grand Chamberlain and aide-de-camp to M. de Wintzingerode, waited at a distance with a few Cossacks. Not seeing his commander return, he inquired of the townsmen what had happened, and they reported that he had been taken under arrest. Then, without giving notice, without sounding any bugle or calling an officer or sergeant to a parley, he went over to the French outpost and simply gave himself up, holding it a point of honour not to abandon his chief. This filial devotion on the part of an officer commanding a troop of men excited some surprise. The young man was sent to custody under guard.

The Emperor, to whom the capture of these officers was reported, ordered them to be brought to him; and they arrived at the point on the road where he dismounted at the same time as ourselves. M. de Wintzingerode was brought to the Emperor by himself; and the Emperor reproached him for serving with the Russians when he was born in Germany, the subject of a country either ruled by France or allied with her. He added that, M. de Wintzingerode being one of his subjects, he would have him tried by a court-martial, which would also charge him with espionage; and that he would be shot as a traitor to his country. The more M. de Wintzingerode tried to justify himself, the more angry the Emperor became, reproaching him with having been for a long time

¹ Leon Alexandrovitch Narishkin, born on February 5, 1785, died at Naples on November 17, 1846. He was made Chamberlain at the age of fourteen, and appointed captain of hussars on March 28, 1812. He was wounded in the head at Borodino: promoted to Major-General in 1813, after Leipzig; and retired on March 23, 1842. He returned to the army on May 22, 1843, and was appointed Général-Lieutenant in 1844.

in the pay of the English, with having taken part in all the plots against him and against France, with trying to suborn the soldiers at Moscow, urging them to desert, and advising them to commit acts of cowardice, in the name of a sovereign who would have despised them for it. M. de Wintzingerode replied that he was not born in a country belonging to France; furthermore, that he had not been in his own country since childhood, and that he had been in the Russian service for many years on account of his attachment and gratitude to the Tsar Alexander, who had befriended him.

Then, attempting to put a different colour on his actions at Moscow, for which the Emperor justly rebuked him, he went on to say that he parleyed to avoid useless bloodshed, and above all to avoid further misfortune for the town: that since the French were going to evacuate it, he limited himself to the suggestion that they should do so without fighting—a suggestion to their common advantage—and so forth.

The Emperor, more and more annoyed, was raising his voice so loud that even the picket could hear him. From the first his personal officers had withdrawn a little. Everyone was on tenterhooks. Glancing at each other, we could see in every eye the distress caused by this painful scene between a sovereign ruler and a captured officer—even though the latter's behaviour at Moscow was very provocative. I was discussing it with the Duke of Piacenza,¹ who, like myself, commented very unhappily on the matter. The Prince of Neuchâtel was even more uncomfortable, as he had remained close to the Emperor. We could see this in his expression, and his remarks confirmed it when, on some pretext, he was able to move away and join us. The Emperor called for camp-guards to remove M. de Wintzingerode. When no one passed on this order, he repeated that someone was to send up camp-guards in such loud tones that the two men attached to the picket came forward. The Emperor then repeated to the prisoner some of the charges he had already made against him, and added that he deserved to be shot as a traitor. At

¹ He was then actually Charles Le Brun, aide-de-camp to the Emperor, but he was to become the second Duke of Piacenza.

this word M. de Wintzingerode, who had been listening with eyes on the ground, stood erect, raised his head, and looking straight at the Emperor and at those standing nearest to him, said loudly:

"As whatever you please, Sire—but not as a traitor."

And he walked away by himself, ahead of the guards, who kept their distance.

The King of Naples, who had joined the Emperor a few moments before, tried in vain to calm him, as also did the Prince of Neuchâtel. He was walking to and fro with hurried nervous steps, summoning now one of us, now another, to vent his anger. He met only with silence. I have never seen him so angry. The worthy Prince of Neuchâtel was beside himself. He came to talk with me, and sent one of his aides-de-camp to instruct the guards that they were to treat the prisoner with consideration.¹ He directed his own officers to supply him with anything he required. Meanwhile the Emperor was yet again recounting to various people his grievances, both old and new, against this General. Some dated from earlier even than the penultimate war against Austria. The Prince of Neuchâtel, like myself, had never seen the Emperor so completely lose control of himself.

A little way off we could see a fine large house. The Emperor, whose nervous irritability had not passed off, sent two squadrons to sack and fire it, adding: "Since these barbarians like to burn their towns, we must help them."

The order was all too well obeyed. It was the only time I ever heard him give such an order; as a rule, indeed, he tried to prevent destruction which only damaged private interests or ruined private citizens. He returned to Wereia before nightfall. Not one inhabitant remained.

I called for the Prince of Neuchâtel as we had agreed, and together we went to the King of Naples to make him undertake to speak to the Emperor about M. de Wintzingerode.

¹ The Emperor's violence "was disapproved; no one took any notice of it, but on the contrary everyone hastened to wait upon the captive General to reassure and condole with him." (*Ségur, Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 145.)

We had obtained information from him about his family and the exact date when he had left Germany; and the Prince of Neuchâtel had already taken an opportunity, on the way back, of explaining to the Emperor that M. de Wintzingerode was not one of his subjects. I was easy about the outcome of this affair in proportion to the Emperor's annoyance; for princes, like other men, have a conscience which bids them right the wrongs they have done. But as the hours seem long to prisoners, we were impatient to obtain the decision, which we could foresee, but which alone could remove all anxiety.

The Emperor sent to me to inquire if I had news of the courier. This order seemed to me to promise well, for it was still before the earliest time that he could arrive. The Emperor, although considerably quieter, still needed to vent his spleen. I listened; and agreed that M. de Wintzingerode's behaviour at Moscow had been irregular, that he had made himself liable to trial and judgment by the corps which had taken him; but I concluded by saying that the Emperor could not have sent for him and spoken to him himself merely in order to show him a pointless severity—for the Emperor, I said, had used his prisoner so sternly in words that no further punishment was needed. I added that severity would now look like personal vengeance, and an act of malice against the Tsar Alexander, whose aide-de-camp the prisoner was; and that rulers had no need, after so many cannon-balls had been fired, of coming to grips with each other in person.

The Emperor began to laugh, and pinched my ear affectionately, as was his habit when he sought to coax people. He said:

"You're right; but Wintzingerode is a bad character, and a schemer. Is it right for a man of his rank to go about suborning soldiers, to lower himself to spying, or pimping for deserters? To allow himself to use the name of his sovereign to incite soldiers to cowardice and mutiny? I shall send him to France. . . . I would rather they had taken a Russian; these foreigners in the service of the highest bidder are poor booty. . . . So it's for Alexander's sake that you take an interest in him? Well, well, we won't hurt him."

The Emperor gave me a little tap on the cheek, his signal mark of affection. From the first I had seen that he only wanted an excuse to go back on his words.

I did not wait for dismissal to go off with such good news; but the Emperor called me back and instructed me to persuade M. Narishkin to dine with us. He added that he would send him back to the Russian outposts in a few days, but that I was not to mention it.

"As to M. de Wintzingerode," the Emperor said to me jokingly, "you don't take so much interest in him because he isn't a Russian."

Then he began again the tale of all his faults:

"He is a secret agent of the London government. He was a spy in Vienna, a spy in Petersburg. He is a framer of intrigues wherever he goes, and doesn't deserve the least consideration—certainly not, on any grounds, the post of aide-de-camp to the Tsar Alexander, for those close personal duties belong only to Russian subjects, honourable men against whom there is no political scandal."

In this conversation with the Emperor I brought in, as we had agreed with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the plea that the interest of our own prisoners demanded some consideration for this man.

"That will not be the reason," replied the Emperor sharply, "for my showing him mercy; his behaviour has put him outside ordinary rights. It is because I never really wanted to do him any harm; and though the Emperor Alexander is at fault in making such a man his aide-de-camp, I will not be likewise at fault in ill-using a man who is particularly close to him. I shall send him to France, with a good escort, to prevent him from intriguing throughout Europe, with three or four other firebrands of his sort."

The Emperor, in dismissing me, told me again not to mention as yet his good intentions toward M. de Wintzingerode. I confined myself to telling the Prince of Neuchâtel that he could be easy about the fate of his prisoner, and he went with the King of Naples to dine in the Emperor's quarters, intending to obtain a definite decision in this matter. A

moment later the Emperor sent for me again, just as we were having dinner, and questioned me about the family and mode of life of young Narishkin. He directed me to tell Narishkin, as though it were from myself, that he wanted peace; that it rested with the Tsar to make an honourable one: that the Emperor Napoleon had never attached great importance to Poland, and had proved as much by emancipating it only in part: that he still attached importance only to the system which should close Europe against England, as the only means of forcing peace on that Power: that it should be possible to agree upon some way of carrying this out which would suit the situation of both parties; that the Emperor Napoleon had occupied Moscow only because they refused to treat with him; he was still ready to enter into negotiations; he still had a magnificent army; and the Russians knew they had not beaten him; that the skirmish with the King of Naples was no battle, enormous reinforcements were coming to him, his war material would be doubled as he drew nearer to the base of operations; therefore, if the war continued, he would be stronger and threaten Russia more seriously than if he had stayed in Moscow; his position was a very favourable one, enabling him to offer good terms to the Tsar Alexander, because it was clear that no military reverse compelled him to it; that the moment was no less favourable to Russia, as the movement of the French Army, being in some sort a retreat, counterbalanced the constant advantages our troops had obtained, and put both governments in a position to negotiate with honour; that the real damage Russia had suffered was by fire, which notoriously was not of our doing; that the Emperor would possibly send him back to the outposts because he knew that his family were particularly close to the Tsar, and he did not wish the Tsar to remain any longer in anxiety about Narishkin's fate, knowing from M. de Lauriston and from myself that we had always had much to congratulate ourselves on in his procedure.

I went back to M. Narishkin, who had dined with us. I reassured him as to his General's fate, and carried out all the Emperor's instructions.

Meanwhile the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel talked to him with their usual amiability. M. de Wintzingerode was regarded as a prisoner and sent to France with his aide-de-camp. I gave M. Narishkin some money and, after rejoining our carriages on the following day, sent him an overcoat, as he had only his uniform. My body-servant found him marching with the head of our column, which they followed as far as Ghjat. Thence they set out for Paris with an officer and a camp-guard as escort. Chance served them well, for they were set free by M. Tchernychev,¹ who fell in with them beyond Borissow as he was going with a troop of Cossacks to warn Wittgenstein of the movements of Tchitchagoff's army.

The Duke of Treviso evacuated Moscow on the ——² after blowing up the Kremlin and the barracks in accordance with the orders he had received. On the 27th he was at Mojaïsk. From there, for several days, they had been sending back the wounded by the scanty means of transport they had been able to get together. Some consignments of rice had arrived there, and the Duke of Abrantès had established depots there which supplied the needs of the first arrivals.

The following day, the 28th, we passed within sight of that town, but did not enter it. The Emperor received news during the day of the Duke of Taranto, who had been forced to lie inactive until the 15th on account of the reinforcement of the enemy.³ In the evening he heard that the rear-guard of the 5th Army had been hotly engaged near Medyn, and that Poniatowski was marching towards Ghjat by cross-roads.

¹ "The presence of these foreigners, witnessing our disasters, worried the Emperor; and he sent them on from Ghjat to Smolensk. They had hardly left headquarters when a troop of Cossacks set them free." (Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 120.)

² In the manuscript this date has been left blank. Mortier evacuated Moscow on the 23rd, at two in the morning: one hour later the explosion took place which destroyed part of the Kremlin.

³ Macdonald and the 10th Corps were forced to concentrate in Courland, before Riga, and were separated from Gouvion Saint-Cyr by Wittgenstein's strategic move upon Drissa. From that time, Macdonald was thrust beyond the range of major operations.

Passing by Mojaïsk, the Emperor halted beside the road to obtain some account of the evacuation and of the distribution of supplies that he had ordered for the wounded.¹ He himself took part in placing many of them in his own carriages, and in any that passed. In spite of all warnings that this would inevitably mean death, the unfortunate men who had left the field hospital to drag themselves along the road were placed, by his orders, wherever they could hang on—on the covers of wagons, and even in the forage-carts, or in the back of vehicles already crowded with the sick and wounded from Malo-Jaroslawetz. And in due course they were the victims of the Emperor's good intentions, who had thought to remove them from any danger they might run through the barbarity of the Russian peasants. Those who did not die of exhaustion, through the discomforts of their position, either fell victims to the cold nights or died of hunger. The wounded of the Guard, and those who were in the Emperor's carriages, were nourished and cared for, thanks to the admirable and devoted work of Doctor Lermier and of Gy; but for the rest, since all the other carriages were lost, not a score of them reached Wilna. Men in the best of health could not have endured this mode of travel, and could not have held on to the vehicles in the positions in which most of them were placed. So one can imagine the state of these unhappy men when they had covered a league or two. They had to endure the jolting, the fatigue, and the cold, all at once. Never was there a more heartrending scene.

To return to Mojaïsk: I must here mention an incident which shows how the impulse of fear on the imagination can

¹ When they left the sick ward they were given provisions for two days. This was a quite insufficient supply, since those to whom the wounded were given in charge, having for the most part no provisions themselves, could not come to their help. Moreover a considerable number, hurrying to get away and reach those fatal transports in which they thought they saw their salvation, and being already greatly inconvenienced by being outside the town, did not take these rations. They soon regretted them; for though on the first and second day some of them moved men to pity, they were not long in learning that hunger makes those who suffer it deaf to all human feeling. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

impart strength even to the weakest. The Emperor's carriages had brought away from Moscow all those of his establishment who were sick with the exception of two postillions, stricken with a malignant and pestilential fever accompanied by blotches. The doctors, regarding them as dead, and their sickness, in any case, as too contagious, told me it was useless to move them. I had them carefully taken to the Guards' infirmary, to lie with the sick of that unit who, being in the same state, would have to be left behind there. All possible steps had been taken to see that they were well cared for, and recommended to the attention of M. Toutolmine, if we should evacuate the city. One of these postillions—I tell the story because I should not have believed it had I not witnessed it myself—one of these postillions, who had been delirious for twelve days, whom I had seen dying the day before we left, and of whom the doctors, as I said, had no further hopes, recovered his reason four days later. He heard mention of our leaving. He learned that the Emperor had left Moscow and that the French who still remained would probably evacuate it. His anxiety—I should say rather his despair—gave him strength to leap from his bed. He dragged himself into the town, procured two bottles of wine, some biscuit and a little brandy, took to the road, and dragged himself along until he rejoined our carriages at Mojaïsk. Everyone thought he was a ghost, unable to believe this was the same man who, when he was carried to the Guards' infirmary, showed hardly a sign of life. They took care of him, and after ten days, on practically starvation diet, he recovered completely.

The carriages, drawn by tired and underfed horses, were travelling fourteen and fifteen hours of the twenty-four. They kept to the road, and found no place that afforded them any supplies. During the halts, the drivers went aside from the road with some of their horses in search of food and fodder, however poor, in the deserted villages and encampments. Being uncertain as to what they would have to-morrow, they kept whatever they found carefully to themselves. Often they had not even time to start a fire. Never was there a sadder fate, a more wretched or hopeless position. Inevitable death

seemed to beset us on all sides. The surgeons and doctors, with neither food nor physic nor bandages, and having for the most part not even bread for themselves, were forced to shun the hapless sick or wounded, to whom they could not be of any service.

As far as Orcha, we had to cross a veritable desert. The country on either hand of our route had been marched over, eaten out, and left bare, by the army and by the detachments that joined us. The plight of the carriages can be imagined. Having left Moscow with us, already full of refugees, women and children, they had had to take up the men wounded at Winkovo and Malo-Jaroslawetz: and to these, as I have said, were added also the wounded at Winkovo and Mojaïsk. They were put on the top-seats of the carts, on the fore-carriage, behind on the trunks, on the seats, in the fodder-carts. They were even put on the hoods of the wagons, when there was no room underneath. One can imagine the spectacle our convoys presented. At the least jolt those who were most insecurely placed fell; the drivers took no care. The driver following, if he were not distracted or in a stupor, would be away from his horses: or even, for fear of stopping and losing his place (in the line), he would drive pitilessly on over the body of the wretch who had fallen. Nor did the other vehicles coming behind pay any heed.

My eyes never saw a sight so horrible as the march of our army forty-eight hours after Mojaïsk. Every heart was closed to pity by the fear of starving, of losing the overladen vehicles, of seeing the horses die, already exhausted by toil and starvation. I still shudder when I say that I have seen men deliberately drive their horses at speed over rough ground, so as to get rid of the unfortunates with whom they were overweighted: and although they knew that horses would mutilate them or wheels crush them, they would yet smile triumphantly when a jolt freed them of one of these wretches. Every man thought of himself, and of himself alone. Every man felt that his life depended on the preservation of his little vehicle, with its few provisions, and would have sacrificed twenty lives to spare the poor hacks that drew this last treasure.

Each heartened himself with the thought that in front of him he would find foodstuffs; but except in some large towns, such as Smolensk, which had a few stores, they found nothing. The horses were fed on rotting corn and straw from old encampments, unless they were taken aside from the road for at least a league's distance, at the risk of capture and massacre.

On the 28th the headquarters staff halted at Ouspenskoie,¹ At two in the morning the Emperor sent for me. He was in bed. He told me to see that the door was well closed, and come and sit close to the bed; this was not his habit. He then spoke to me about the situation in general, and about the state of the army, whose extreme disorganization he still did not or would not admit. He ended by bidding me speak to him frankly, and tell him what I myself thought. I did not have to be pressed, but gave the Emperor my opinion in full on the consequences that would ensue from the disorganization of the army, and especially on the miseries that would be caused by the severe cold. I reminded him of the reply which the Tsar Alexander was reported to have made when he received, through Lauriston, the proposals of peace sent from Moscow: "My campaign is just beginning." I told him that he must take this reply literally: the further the season advanced, the more everything would favour the Russians and, above all, the Cossacks.

"Your prophet Alexander has been mistaken more than once," he said; but there was no lightness in the tone of his reply.

The Emperor did not seem convinced of the truth of my forecast. He flattered himself that the superior intelligence of our troops would enable them somehow to safeguard themselves against the cold—that they would take the same precautions as the Russians, or even improve on them. He did not question that the army would establish its winter quarters at Orcha or Witepsk. He would not yet admit that he might be forced to retire behind the Beresina, if only to be nearer his main supply depots at Minsk and at Wilna, and in closer contact with Schwarzenberg and the armies on the Dwin a

¹ A ruined manor-house between Mojaïsk and Borodino.

whose latest operations would necessarily affect his decisions. He did not question, in view of their strength, that they would have captured Polotsk, and he regretted the wounding of Marshal Saint-Cyr, which robbed him, he said, of his most capable lieutenant.¹ The arrival of the Polish Cossacks, of whom he still expected to find 1500 or 2000 in a few days, ought, it seemed to him, entirely to change the situation and the state of our affairs; for they would guard the army and give our soldiers time to rest and feed themselves. Since Malo-Jaroslawetz these wretches had lived on horse-flesh and a little thin soup. And this last help came only to those who had been on marauding expeditions; for the rest, they lived only on grilled horseflesh. The horses that collapsed on the march were torn in pieces before they had time to die.

After an hour's conversation about the army, about Russia, Poland, the prosperous state of France, and the means of making good his losses, the Emperor reached the main question, about which he had sent for me, and to which he had led up with this introduction. He told me it was possible—it was even probable—that he would go to Paris as soon as he had established the army in some definite position. He asked what I thought of this proposal: whether it would make a bad impression on the army: whether it would not be the best way of reorganizing the army, of keeping a firm hand on Europe, and keeping everything quiet: and whether, finally, I foresaw any difficulties about crossing Prussia without an escort. He added that in a week's time the Russian Army would be in no better state to give battle than his own; they too needed rest and reorganization; it froze as hard for the Russians as for us: and, moreover, the way in which Kutusoff was following us without embarking on any major operation proved that he lacked the necessary strength. We had travelled so slowly, he said, and with so many stops, that it should have been easy for him to get ahead of us; Kutusoff must know we were marching in column of route, and yet we heard nothing of him. He said further that we should find a fresh

¹ Polotsk had been taken by the enemy, and Gouvion Saint-Cyr wounded on October 18th.

and well-organized army at Smolensk, and another on the Beresina; that the artillery sections of these armies and of those on the Dwina were well horsed, and strong enough to reinforce our own: that the Austrians and Reynier were only a little further back:¹ that with all this war material brought together we should have an adequate superiority, even if the Army of Moldavia joined up with the other Russian armies, to ensure us a quiet winter. Wilna could send several divisions, which would still further increase our strength later on, and the immense stores of clothing there would meet all needs.

I replied to the Emperor that, just because the evils of our plight seemed to me greater than he could see or believe, I felt no hesitation about the remedy. There was only one: that he should date his orders of the day, like his decrees, from the Palace of the Tuileries. I did not stop at minor considerations, such as what might be said or thought in the army, when the question really was what might be attempted in Europe. I added that what he had thought of doing was the one thing which could be really useful, the one thing which a faithful servant could advise. He had no need to hesitate: he needed only to choose his moment carefully. As to the danger of crossing Prussia, it could be avoided by travelling under another name; as nobody would know of the journey in advance, the possible dangers could be classed with the thousand risks to which one is exposed every day.

I tried to open the Emperor's eyes to the real state of the army, pointing out that the evils of its disorganization were all the more difficult to check because discouragement on the part of certain leaders was one of its causes. They were indeed letting their units break up entirely, and did nothing to keep the soldiers in hand, lest they should have to fight with too small a number of men, whose loyalty kept them with the colours. I told the Emperor what impression I thought would be made, not only in France but in Europe, by the news of his retreat, and, even more, by the news of those disasters in

¹ Schwarzenberg was at Bialystok, and Reynier, commanding the 7th Corps (Saxons), was at Wengrow.

which he was still reluctant to believe; and I drew the conclusion that his return was the necessary counter to this.

The Emperor, in the end, seemed less sceptical about my forebodings. He thought that only his presence could adequately hasten the mustering of all the forces to give an army in three months. He ended by asking if I did not think that overtures to the Tsar Alexander, now that the Russian provinces would be evacuated, might not lead to peace.

"No more than at Moscow," I replied. "The news of our retreat will have made everyone exultant."

It was half-past five when the Emperor dismissed me. He told me to think over what he had said, and that he would discuss it with me again after he had talked to the Prince of Neuchâtel.¹

On the next day, the 29th, we were at Ghjat. The cold was already intense. The despatches, which were now more frequent as we were going to meet them, had for several days met with no delays, but they had again been interrupted since the previous day by the appearance of enemy parties on our line of communications. The latest despatches from Paris were dated in September. At Borowsk we had begun to feel the cold. Only the surface of the ground was frozen. The weather was fine, and the nights were quite endurable in the open if one had a fire. Here at Ghjat the winter was already more noticeable.

Since leaving Wereia, I had taken to travelling on foot. I made the daily marches of the army, and found it advantageous as I did not suffer from the cold, and met with no ill results during our long retreat. At Ghjat we found the remnant of a consignment sent from France for the Emperor's household in the charge of two footmen. Part of the consignment had been pillaged by the Cossacks. Having no means of transport for these supplies, we distributed them all round, and there was abundance at headquarters. Clos-Vougeot and Chambertin were the common drink. We stored up strength and a sense of well-being against the days of real privation to

¹ In spite of this late sitting, Napoleon left Ouspenskoie at day-break.

which we were just coming. Everyone still had a few provisions. There was a small ration of biscuit. The men endured the long marches well, in spite of the cold nights and several patches of ground which a brief thaw had made very bad going. It was otherwise with the horses. The necessity of going two leagues aside from our route to forage, and the poor quality of what was brought in with such danger and exertion, left them worn out. All but the strongest died. The reserve horses were harnessed up; and as these were no longer enough, we were already beginning to abandon some of the vehicles.

So far the Cossacks following our rear-guards gave very little trouble. As the state of the cavalry and the speed of our march prevented us from sending out scouting parties, we had no news of the enemy. However, as there were no Cossacks alongside our route, the raiding parties from the head of the column went out and returned, seeing only a few peasants who fled at our approach. This easy foraging had one great disadvantage, in that the sense of security thus created increased the number of stragglers. As there was no food without raids, everyone wanted to raid. The raiders and stragglers of the rear-guard were not so fortunate. The enemy captured a good number of these every day. Satisfied no doubt with this, they seldom ventured within range of our muskets.

On the 20th, we made Weliczewo our headquarters for the night. This fine manor, however, had not a single rafter left, and we had difficulty in collecting enough material from the wreckage to patch up one room for the Emperor and one for the Major-General. The billiard-table was the only piece of furniture still intact. Here we received the delayed despatches.

On the following day, the 31st, the headquarters and the Guard were stationed at Wiasma, where we stayed through the first of November.¹ As much of the town as had survived the original conflagration was in good condition. The army

¹ The Emperor arrived at Wiasma at four in the evening of the 31st, and set out again at midday on the 2nd of November.

received some rations there, and the horses attached to headquarters were given a little fodder. The few inhabitants remaining at the time of the invasion were now still fewer.

The Emperor did not even make a guess at Kutusoff's march; and Kutusoff left us very quiet. The weather was fine. The Emperor repeated more than once that the Russian autumn was like the autumns at Fontainebleau; and, judging what the weather would be like in ten days' or a fortnight's time by what it was on that particular day, he said to the Prince of Neuchâtel that this was just the weather one had at Fontainebleau around St. Hubert's Day, and that the stories people told about the Russian winter would only scare children. At Wiasma the Emperor had news of General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who was holding Yelnia as he had been ordered.¹ Also he learned of the evacuation of Polotsk,² notified Belluno that he was moving to get into touch with him, and ordered him to retake Polotsk.³ He also wrote to the Duke of Bassano, to announce his movements, and instructed the Duke in his turn to inform the Prince of Schwarzenberg, Marshal Macdonald, etc. His movement aimed, he said, at getting into touch with his other armies for the winter.⁴

On the 2nd we halted at Samilowo;⁵ on the 3rd at Slawkowo, where we had the first snow. It was the general opinion that the security of our flanks during the preceding few days (the enemy, since his attack at Medyn, having barely kept up with our rear-guard) was only a ruse to foster confidence and to

¹ Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 272.

² Napoleon received at Wiasma the reports from Gouvion Saint-Cyr dated October 19th and 20th.

³ Victor had left Smolensk to go to the assistance of the 2nd Corps. He came up with it on October 29th, on the Lukomla.

⁴ The *Correspondance* includes no letter to Maret dated from Wiasma, except an unimportant note about the transformation of a Protestant church at Cassel into a Catholic church.

⁵ The Emperor spent the night of the 2nd at Samlowo, in a little church which had been surrounded with a barricade. At three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day he arrived at the manor-house of Jaskowo, near Slawkowo.

bring about, somewhere near Borodino, another skirmish on the lines of Woronovo. But Kutusoff's weak pursuit was actually due, as we afterwards discovered, to his uncertainty regarding our movements. He did not know definitely until the 27th that our march against him had only been the prelude to a retreat. On the 28th he directed Miloradovich, to whom he attached a strong body of infantry and cavalry, to attack us and cut off our rearward divisions before we reached Wiasma.¹ The Emperor learned of this attack on the 3rd, at Slawkowo. He learned that the Viceroy, Prince Poniatowski, and Elchingen had had to support Eckmühl, who was then in command of the rear-guard.² He had already been informed in the morning that the Cossacks who, since Malo-Jaroslawetz, had been content with a very weak pursuit of our rear-guard, had had some success in an attack on a convoy on the 1st of November;³ and at this later time he learned that the Prince of Eckmühl, who commanded the rear-guard and whose march was slowed and hindered by the large number of stragglers whom hunger and sickness had already separated from their units, was still a good distance from Wiasma when the Russian infantry appeared. Not having a strong force, the Marshal had to hasten his march. Meanwhile Marshal Ney was encamped before Wiasma. The Viceroy and Prince Poniatowski had known since the previous day that the enemy was closing in on the Prince of Eckmühl and had consequently

¹ After Malo-Jaroslawetz, Kutusoff had retreated towards Kalouga as far as Gantcharowo. On the 28th he gave orders for the pursuit. Miloradovich took the cross-country road which came out on our flank between Ghjat and Wiasma, while Kutusoff himself advanced upon Smolensk by a parallel route 8 or 10 leagues to the south of ours. Platow, with twenty regiments of Cossacks, was ordered to follow our rear-guard.

² Battle of Wiasma (November 3, 1812). Cf. Baron Lejeune, *Souvenirs d'un Officier de l'Empire*, Vol. II, 393. Lejeune was Chief-of-Staff to Davout.

³ During that day Miloradovich's scouts had carried out a raid on Eugène's baggage-train, which was having difficulty at the crossing of the marsh at Tsarewo-Zaimitché. At this point an earthen causeway, 500 yards long, over which the high road previously ran, was now unpracticable.

slackened their advance. They also took up their position before Wiasma in order to await him.

The Cossacks swarmed over the countryside, and constantly cut off communications between our corps, however close they were to each other. The fight went to our advantage, once we were in battle order; but it was unfortunate that the Emperor, not expecting this renewed activity on the part of Kutusoff, and thinking that the Russian general would try to get ahead of us rather than harass us, was at Slawkowo on that day—and the Guard with him. As nobody held supreme command, there was no unity in the dispositions made. Our men fought bravely for six hours, but solely on the defensive. The enemy were thus made to pay dearly for the daring of their attempt, and lost a great number of men; and for this they achieved nothing except that they inflicted severe damage on the 1st Corps, in which some disorder was shown when it passed ahead of the Viceroy's army. This disorder was still greater at the crossing of the bridge.¹ Until then—as long, that is, as it had to withstand alone the attacks of the enemy—the 1st Corps had maintained its honour and reputation, although it was fiercely attacked and its formation broken by the artillery. This momentary disorder was conspicuous because it was the first time that these gallant infantry broke their ranks and compelled their dogged commander to give ground. I have related these painful details because from this incident must be dated our disorganization and misfortunes. The 1st Corps, which on taking the field was the largest and finest, a rival to the Guard, was thenceforward the hardest hit; and the evil spread. Poniatowski, the Viceroy, and Ney all fought as in the days of our success.

The Emperor had to give the command of the rear-guard to Marshal Ney, whose energy and courage increased with his dangers and difficulties. The Emperor busied himself drawing up a body of instructions on the manner in which the retreat should be conducted. This, he thought, would put right all the troubles of which we complained, arising from the attacks of the Cossacks. He likened them to the Arabs, and directed

¹ The bridge over the Wiasma.

that we should march, as in Egypt, with the baggage in the centre, a half-battalion at the front and the rear, and battalions in file on the flanks. In this way we should be able to direct our fire, in case of need, on all sides, like a square.¹ The units could march, he said, at a short distance from each other, with artillery between them. He talked a great deal about these dispositions, which he regarded as a sure safeguard for the army, flattering himself that he would be able to take up a position at Smolensk. The danger, however, was not in the attacks of the Cossacks, which our soldiers when in platoons never feared and had always repulsed when they were so minded. The danger lay in hunger, in the lack of provisions, and in the absence of any organized supplies service, which led to the disorganization of all the units, an inevitable consequence

¹ Letter from the Prince of Neuchâtel to the Duke of Elchingen: "Monsieur le Duc, the Emperor has given you his instructions verbally, and no one could be more competent than yourself to know what dispositions should be made. You should energetically prevent the attempts of this rabble of Cossacks, and treat them as we treated the Arabs in Egypt."

Letter of the Prince of Neuchâtel to the Prince of Eckmühl: "Prince: It is of the utmost importance to change the formation in which you march in the neighbourhood of the enemy, since he has such a great force of Cossacks. You should march, as we marched in Egypt, with the baggage in the centre and proceeding in as many files as the road allows. One half-battalion should march in front and one in the rear, with battalions in file on either flank, so that by facing outward they can give fire in all directions. It would be no disadvantage to space these battalions a little, and put several files of cannon between them on the flanks. There should be no man away from his unit and no man without a gun. After the narrowing of the road at Wiasma, the Duke of Elchingen will act as rear-guard to the army. The Emperor directs that after Wiasma you should march so as to support the Duke of Elchingen in case of need, and to that end come to the necessary arrangements with him and have an officer of your staff constantly in attendance upon him. You should regulate your pace in accordance with that of the Duke of Elchingen. Since Ney's corps and yours are enough to conduct the retreat, it is the Emperor's intention that the Prince Poniatowski and the Viceroy's corps should make a full day's march in order to reach Smolensk, marching in the above formation. I am leaving four officers at Wiasma to bring us news of you." (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

of the speed of the march and the devastation over this line of country. It would have been necessary to limit the march to three or four leagues a day, measured along the route, in order to cover as much again in collecting food on our flanks. In this way, the soldiers would have followed the flag, and would nearly all have been saved. The enemy, however, would have gained the lead, or else overtaken us and attacked us from all quarters: and to obviate this danger, it was held, the other disadvantages had to be endured.

The Emperor, thinking that this attack by the Russians was a general movement of their whole army, decided to halt. By massing his troops near Slawkowo he hoped to have a good opportunity of falling unexpectedly upon the enemy, who thought they were only following up a rear-guard, and so making them regret their rash pursuit. Ney reported on the events of the previous day, in consequence of the disorder of the 1st Corps, which was so discouraging that any man but the Emperor would have abandoned this idea of a surprise attack. Ney announced that he was occupying the narrow passage of a wood behind Wiasma, but that, on account of the withdrawal of the 1st and 4th Corps, he would have to continue his retreating movement before dawn in order not to risk the loss of his troops. He added that the behaviour of the 1st Army on the previous day had set a bad example to all the troops, and had a bad and dangerous effect on them. This report, however, which arrived in the middle of the morning, did not change the Emperor's dispositions. He still believed that all the Russian Army was massed together, and that a lively and sudden attack on this cumbersome body of troops would have a glorious result. He stayed at Slawkowo, hoping for a thorough revenge, throughout the 4th. The enemy, however, attempted nothing. Ney's discouraging reports followed one upon another; and so did the arrival of the various corps, who threw each other into confusion. On the 5th, the Emperor had to resume his march. Junot led off, followed by the Young Guard and the 2nd and 4th Cavalry Corps; then the Old Guard, Poniatowski, Eugène, and Davout, whose corps was disintegrated. Ney conducted the rear-guard with

a vigour worthy of his courage, and infused his own energy into all around him.

On the 5th, we spent the night at Dorogobouje. The despatches continued to arrive regularly. The weather, which had been milder for thirty-six hours before, became suddenly colder. There was no news of the enemy. Was Kutusoff following behind? Or was he ahead of us? This uncertainty added further to the Emperor's difficulties and anxieties. He gave his attention to the organization of a body of cavalry which should guard our flanks;¹ but with the exception of the Guard our cavalry was so much reduced that from the beginning there was little to be hoped from this measure. It was here that the Emperor, forced to take stock of himself and probe his wounds to their depth, realized how much he had already lost.

On the 6th, headquarters were at Mikhaïlowska. There the Emperor received the news of the retreat of the corps of the Dwina to Siénno; and the news of the arrival there of the army of the Duke of Belluno, which would, he thought, put everything once more in order.²

On the following day he had a second order sent off, telling him again to recapture Polotsk, and also notifying him again of our expected arrival at Smolensk, where, he said, he would go into quarters. It was a day of bad news. The Emperor was first much concerned about the details he had learned of the retreat of his troops on the Dwina, which occurred just when he most needed their success. Then he was greatly perturbed by the first news he received of Malet's conspiracy.³

¹ Caulaincourt is here a little previous. The order creating this body of cavalry, of which General de Latour-Maubourg was to have the command, is dated from Smolensk, on November 9th.

² As we have seen, Victor effected a junction with the 2nd Army, which was then under the command of General Merle. The 2nd Army, defeated by Wittgenstein, had fallen back on to Siénno and from there on to Czereja. For the order to recapture Polotsk, see *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19326, the Emperor to Berthier, Mikhaïlowska, November 7th.

³ The question of the date on which the Emperor first heard of Malet's conspiracy remains to this day obscure. M. Frédéric

On the evening of October 22nd, Malet escaped from the private asylum where he had been kept a prisoner, and had gained such influence over certain public officials and over the troops of the garrison that he succeeded in paralysing the government from midnight until nine in the morning. During this time he placed the Minister and the Prefect of Police¹ under arrest, and seriously wounded General Hulin, the Commandant of Paris. This conspiracy was foredoomed to failure; and at the same time that the Emperor learned of it, he also learned that all the conspirators had been arrested and brought to trial. Nevertheless the daring of the attempt, carried out at the very seat of government, made a remarkable impression on him; and he was not reassured as to its consequences, nor convinced that the government held all the guilty parties and all the threads of the affair in their hands, until three or four more despatches had come in. There were no private letters of that date, and we knew of the affair only from the Emperor, who spoke of it as insignificant, the action of a madman. On that particular day he discussed it intimately only with the Prince of Neuchâtel; and in that discussion he did not spare the Minister of Police. He was of the opinion that this incident, the undertaking of a madman, had few, if any ramifications.

Malet, a former General, who was held prisoner in a private asylum, had formed the scheme of starting a republican

Masson has devoted a whole chapter to it in his book *Pour l'Empereur*, I, 270.

As M. Masson points out, Denniée says (*Itinéraire*, 120) that this news came through on November 2nd. Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 215) gives the 6th. Meneval (*Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, I, 356) gives the 8th. Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 284) gives the 6th.

Frédéric Masson, basing his conclusions largely on some letters from Napoleon to Cambacérès and to Maret, which are dated from Smolensk on November 11th, inclines to the latest date. (*Lettres interceptées par les Russes durant la campagne de 1812*, published by Léon Hennet and Emm. Martin, *la Sabretache*, 1913, pp. 312 *et seq.*) The evidence of M. de Caulaincourt compels one to favour the 6th, the date already given to Ségur and Fain.

¹ The Duke of Rovigo, and Pasquier.

revolution by means of a forged decree of the Senate and an engineered rumour of the Emperor's death. He put this scheme into action on the night of October 23rd¹ by forging orders to the Prefect of Police, the troops, and the warders of the gaols where the men were held whom he made his tools—Generals Lahorie and Guidal. These men, who according to the Minister were themselves deceived by the conspiracy at first, went to the barracks;² and the Prefect of the Seine³ had the weakness to prepare a meeting chamber for the new government. The colonels Soulier and Rabbe⁴ and a few other officers had been deceived in turn; and they brought out their troops, and so were able to arrest the Minister and the Prefect of Police. The former had been taken in his bed by Lahorie, who took possession of the Ministry, while Guidal carried off the Prefect of Police, and Malet went to the quarters of General Hulin, military governor, who offered resistance and had his jaw shattered by a pistol-shot. However, Laborde and some other officers, recovering from their first surprise, and seeing how few the conspirators were, put themselves at the head of some other troops and released the Minister of Police and the Prefect from confinement. From that moment the Government regained the control it ought never to have lost, and the three conspirators were arrested. At Paris the incident was hardly noticed. By ten o'clock in the morning order was everywhere restored.

¹ The night of the 22nd-23rd October.

² It is hardly necessary to point out that the account given by Caulaincourt, who could not have been an eyewitness of these scenes, contains a number of inaccuracies which the reader will readily correct. Thus Lahorie and Guidal not only did not go to the barracks, but were themselves set free from the gaol by the troops from the Popincourt barracks, where Malet had himself gone to suborn the governor, Soulier. Again, Pasquier and Savary were both arrested by Lahorie, accompanied by Guidal.

³ Frochot.

⁴ Colonel Rabbe was in command of the 1st Regiment of the Parisian Guard. Commandant (not Colonel) Soulier commanded the 10th Cohort of the National Guard.

According to the reports made to the Emperor, the conduct of the Prefect of the Seine, M. Frochot, was blameworthy, and later information confirmed this opinion.

The Minister of War took a different view of this conspiracy from the Minister of Police.

"Clarke," the Emperor remarked, "is convinced that this is a widespread conspiracy, and that it has other and more important leaders. Savary says the opposite. At first, the rumour of my death made everyone lose his head. The Minister for War, who parades his devotion to me, did not stop to put on his boots before running to the barracks to take the oath to the King of Rome and get Savary out of prison. Only Hulin showed any courage, and only Laborde any presence of mind. The behaviour of the Prefect and the colonels is beyond understanding. What reliance," he added bitterly, "can one put on men whose early training does not confirm them in principles of honour and loyalty? I am furious at the feebleness and ingratitude of the Prefect, and of the colonel of the Paris regiment, one of my old soldiers, whose fortune I have made."

These early particulars made the Emperor eager for the next despatch, to discover the result of the inquiries they were conducting.

"This revolt," he said, "cannot be the work of one man."

On the way to Pniewo¹ he was repeatedly asking me if I could see the courier. The details ultimately confirmed what the Duke of Rovigo reported. General Clarke, however, continued to see behind this incident a widespread conspiracy and his report continued to occupy the Emperor's mind. The behaviour of those involved in the affair exasperated him so that he talked of it continually.

"Rabbe is a fool," he said to me. "A seal and some nice embossing would take him in. But Frochot is a man of brains and quick intelligence. How was he tricked, and dragged into it? He's an old Jacobin. The Republic must

¹ A manor near Slobpneva, at which the Imperial headquarters were established in the early afternoon of November 7th.

have tempted him again.¹ He is used to revolutions: I don't suppose this one surprised him any more than the ten he's seen already. My death may have seemed quite probable; and he must have considered how to keep his post before he thought of his duty. In his time he must have taken twenty oaths of allegiance; and he forgot the one that bound him to my dynasty as he forgot the others. But to be chief magistrate of Paris, and yet not resist the preparation of a council-chamber for the conspirators in the Hôtel de Ville, in his own official quarters, not make a single inquiry, not take a single opposing step, not even make a gesture to uphold the authority of his lawful sovereign—he must be in the plot.² Such credulity would be incredible in a man like Frochot. Cambacérès and Savary made a great mistake in not having him arrested. He is more of a traitor than Malet. Malet was always hatching plots; I have already pardoned him four times; with him, plotting is a vocation; my mercy weighed on him. He is a madman.³ But Frochot—he sits in the Council of State, he is chief administrator of the principal department in France, he is a man on whom I have loaded honours. In him such baseness and treachery are revolting! He did not have to fear starvation if he lost his post. Now he has lost his honour. Does he value that less than his post? Even if Malet had made him Prime Minister, it wouldn't have saved him from

¹ Frochot, member for Châtillon-sur-Seine in the Estates General of 1789, had been intimate with Mirabeau and was one of the executors of his will.

² See Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 29.

³ In June 1804, when Malet commanded the troops at Angoulême, the Prefect requested that he should be cashiered. The First Consul was content to change his station, and sent him to Sables-d'Olonne. On March 2, 1805, Malet was put on the retired list on account of further brushes with the civil authority in La Vendée. He appealed to the Emperor, who recalled him to active service on August 26th. On May 31, 1806 he was retired on account of financial irregularities, but this decree was never put into force and Malet continued to draw his active-service pay. For attempting a conspiracy against the Emperor in 1808 he was detained as a political prisoner at Sainte-Pélagie; and thence he was transferred, in June 1810, to Doctor Dubuisson's private asylum.

the disgrace of having betrayed his duty and his benefactor. I know that one cannot always rely on men who turn the profession of arms into a trade, a speculation, and will serve any man at all who pays them with office for the dangers they run; but this man is a leading magistrate, a man with a position, a man with children to whom he should be a model of that loyalty to one's sovereign which is the prime duty. I cannot credit such baseness.¹

The Emperor was indignant, and seemed deeply wounded.

"The French are like women," he added; "one must not stay away from them too long. You cannot tell what intrigues they may be persuaded into—and what might not happen—if they were long without news of me. Yet that is what may happen if the Russians have any common sense."

Judging by other remarks that the Emperor made to me (and by what he said to Duroc and Berthier, who repeated it to me), he had revised his opinion about the Minister of Police, and understood even better perhaps than it was understood in Paris, how Rovigo came to be surprised and carried off, the conspiracy having been conceived and executed only by Malet. Clarke continued to suspect the existence of conspirators in all ranks; and the name of Frochot, who was implicated, gave some weight to this opinion in the Emperor's mind also.

The Duke of Parma² and the Duke of Rovigo were fortunately of the opposite opinion. The latter continued to represent Lahorie as a dupe, who knew nothing of the affair until they came to fetch him from prison. The reports of the Prefect of Police, and of several others, were to the same effect.

[*Here Caulaincourt has made a later insertion in the manuscript, headed—"The Malet Incident: Extracts from Reports to the Emperor."*]

The Duke of Rovigo has always maintained that Malet was

¹ Frochot was replaced in the Préfecture of the Seine by M. de Chabrol on December 23, 1812.

² Cambacérès.

the sole conspirator, and that the others, even Lahorie, were merely tools. Indeed Lahorie, who in arresting the Duke had told him that the Emperor was killed on the 8th, was startled into hesitation for a moment when the Duke replied that this was impossible, or at least more than he could fathom, as a letter from the Emperor dated on the 8th had just arrived, and indeed was still on his mantelpiece.

"Then they must have lied to me," said Lahorie. He was disturbed; and it was probably on this account that he released the Minister from the hands of the soldiers and went with him to his room, on the pretext of allowing him to dress. For the Minister, hearing the noise of the panels being smashed in the doors of his drawing-room, had sprung out of bed, and was going in his nightshirt to confront the intruders at the moment when the soldiers, in spite of his protests to the officer in command, rushed upon him. Lahorie seized the papers and read the Emperor's letter, but, blinded by his hate, persuaded himself that the news of his death might be of later date.

Guidal, the Adjutant-Commandant, followed by a single detachment, took Rovigo to the gaol in a cab. Some of the picked police who were having a drink on the quay were astonished to see the Minister, their former colonel, go by in this undistinguished vehicle with a detachment of troops behind him. They ran to the barracks to notify Colonel Henry, who ordered them to mount horse. Meanwhile the Minister's secretary, M. —¹ arrived and told him what had happened. While this was going on, they were arresting M. Pasquier and Malet was firing his pistol at Hulin, who defended himself. M. Pasquier went to join Rovigo at the gaol, where the warder put them behind bars for their greater safety, and to get them out of the hands of the soldiery. After a quarter of an hour the special police arrived and freed the prisoners. They then returned to the Ministry, while the squadron of police, in accordance with the Minister's orders, arrested the officers of Soulier's cohort, by whom the Minister and the Prefect had been carried off. Lahorie was dispossessed of the

¹ Left blank in the manuscript.

Ministry at the end of one hour, during which he had only had time to order himself a coat.¹

As soon as Frochot, who was in the country, was informed, he hurried back and found, it was said, that everything had been prepared by his staff for the new government. And he approved all they had done, instead of opposing it and taking action in the interest of the King of Rome, as he ought to have done if he believed the report to be true.

Malet had announced himself to the troops by the name of General Lamothe, who was better known in Paris than himself. When the Minister was informed of this by the declaration of the officers brought before him, he immediately sent for General Lamothe, to confront them with him in the Ministry itself. Although they had all spoken of him, not one of them recognized him: it was when they saw Malet, with whom they were later confronted, that they all exclaimed: "This is the General Lamothe who came to call us out and whose orders we obeyed."

The Minister of War thought he saw additional ground for suspicion against General Lamothe in certain passes issued by the conspirators, which were stamped with the letter "L"; but the Duke of Rovigo rightly saw in this only the initial of the word "Liberté." Thus Lamothe was saved from prison and trial.

In Malet's proclamations there was mention of MM. de Laplace, de Tracy, and several others, self-styled members of an opposition group. General Clarke wished to have them arrested also, but the Duke of Rovigo was steadfastly opposed to it. He was convinced that Malet was the sole conspirator, as the inquiry afterwards proved. He also regarded Colonel Soulier, commanding officer of the regiment which had carried out the arrests, as a victim of the ruse. This colonel, who had recently been promoted for his heroic defence of Mont-Jouy,² had, it is true, ordered his subordinate officers to carry out

¹ "As soon as he was installed in the official quarters of the Ministry of Police he sent for a tailor, from whom he ordered a minister's uniform." (Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 22.)

² In Spain.

Malet's instructions without making any investigations; but he had only arrived in Paris two days before and was so ill with fever that he could not leave his bed.¹

Although all the guilty were brought to trial and the affair was ended, the example of daring given by Malet and the behaviour of the Prefect of the Seine gave the Emperor much matter for reflection. He was particularly concerned about the inevitable effect of the incident in Europe. The demonstrable possibility of such an attempt, although its outcome had also shown that it could not succeed, seemed to him in itself a serious blow to his authority, a source of trouble and further attempts on the part of a few hotheads in English pay. At Paris, he would have forgotten the matter in a day; at 600 leagues' distance, and at a moment when the world might be for some time without news of him or of the army, the affair was bound to cause anxiety. Other intriguers might be tempted when they saw what one man, his plans laid in the solitude of his prison, could achieve within a quarter of an hour of leaving it, with no help but a false rumour, and in the heart of the capital, under a stable government and an alert administration. Such were the thoughts which crowded upon the Emperor's mind, and upon ours; and our circumstances were bound to give them added importance.

The news of grave events which arrived to beset the Emperor at Mikhaïlewska have interrupted my account of the military dispositions which he ordered. I mentioned that he directed the Duke of Belluno to recapture Polotsk, and announced his own intention of taking up a position at Smolensk. On the 7th the Emperor, as part of this plan, moved Eugène off the route and sent him towards Dukhovchtina, so that he should later find himself in line;² but meanwhile the troops commanded by Baraguay d'Hilliers, which he believed to be

¹ See Rovigo's *Mémoires*, Garnier's ed., IV, 100.

² Dukhovchtina lies to the north of the route of the main army, between Dorogobouje and Witepsk. This order had been given the day before. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19325; the Emperor to Berthier, Dorogobouje, November 6, 1812.)

at Yelnia, were retiring to Smolensk,¹ and the Duke of Elchingen was engaged in a brisk conflict before Dorogobouje.²

Platow was following Prince Eugène, and Kutusoff, as we learned at Smolensk, was marching parallel with us, by Ermakova, towards Yelnia. For several days the Emperor had discussed his plan of going into quarters at Smolensk; but on that day he announced openly that the army would do so at Witepsk and Orcha.

On the 7th, we were at Penwo. The cold was becoming more and more intense, but everyone thought we were coming to the end of want, and so the end of our worst misfortunes, when we reached the stores of Smolensk and the quarters that the Emperor announced. Every face looked brighter. The sight of a consignment of provisions on its way from Smolensk to Ney's rear-guard reminded us of happier days and happier outlooks; it lifted the hearts of the most discouraged. Everyone believed there was plenty at Smolensk, and that we were making harbour. The Emperor most of all flattered himself with this idea, and spoke of it several times. He already imagined his army in line. The cold had been severe, and continued so, but the weather was clear and the sun shone. In everyone's mind Smolensk stood for an end of privation. Yet all the way from Mikhaïlewska the sight of the road was made horrible by the bodies of the wounded who had been sent back, numbers of whom were found dead of cold or hunger, or abandoned by those charged with moving them. The road was also covered with stragglers, though on this day there was less disorder. Some of the soldiers rallied round their flags so as to share in the anticipated distributions of rations. The Emperor observed this, and it gave him a momentary consolation. Late in the day the weather became

¹ As early as the 6th, Napoleon had written: "General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who was at Yelnia, must have set out this morning on a similar movement of concentration towards Smolensk." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19324; the Emperor to Berthier, Dorogobouje, November 6, 1812.)

² On the 6th, the rear-guard under Ney was attacked in the narrow section of road at Samlowo. (De Fezensac, *Journal de la campagne de Russie*, Paris, p. 80.)

damper, looking like a thaw, which made the way harder for the artillery and the transports. Luckily the frost set in again; for they would all have been bogged if the road had broken up. Meanwhile the Viceroy, marching towards Witepsk, was close pressed by Platow and his horde of Cossacks.

On the 8th, headquarters were at Beredikino.¹ For a moment the Emperor thought of pushing forward as far as Smolensk himself; but the surface of the snow had been first melted in the thaw and then frozen when the frost set in again, and this made the road impracticable, particularly in the dark. The fear that by leaving he might draw after him the swarms of stragglers, and so cause disorder in the night at Smolensk, made the Emperor decide to wait till the following day; and in this he was well-advised, for even those on foot were hard put to it to hold the road. One can imagine the state of the horses, none of them shod as this climate demanded. Already weakened with fatigue and hunger, they kept falling down and could find no grip to rise again. After vain struggling they lay where they fell, and it was impossible to coax them to any further effort to get them to their feet. The slipperiness of the road forced us to abandon a great number. And from that arose the greatest disasters of the retreat.

Nearly everybody travelled on foot. The Emperor followed the march of the Guard in his carriage, accompanied by the Prince of Neuchâtel; but he got down two or three times a day and went on foot for a time, leaning sometimes on the Prince's arm, sometimes on mine, sometimes on one of his aides-de-camp. The road and the verges were covered with the bodies of wounded men who had died of cold and hunger and want. No field of battle ever bore so fearful an aspect. Yet, as I say, in spite of our misfortunes and these scenes of horror, the sight of the spires of Smolensk, showing through clear weather and lit with sunlight, had put heart into even those most weighed down with misery. Many had regained their spirits. This indifference must doubtless be put down to the danger in which every individual stood, stifling the pity

¹ Or Ghoredikino, a posting-station outside Smolensk. The Emperor arrived there on the 8th at two in the afternoon.

that in other circumstances must have been stirred by the unhappy sights before their eyes.

On the 9th, about noon, we came again within sight of Smolensk. The Emperor, who had already arranged in advance the dispositions of troops which the circumstances demanded, occupied himself with the distribution of rations that were to be made to the army. Unfortunately the state of the stores bore no relation to his hopes or to our needs, but as few men had rejoined their units the disorder enabled us to satisfy all those who had. That was the essential thing to ensure, for these brave men had every need of encouragement. The number of these brave and loyal soldiers was not, alas, very great. General Charpentier, the Governor,¹ had been poorly supported by the local administrations and the commanders of the troops, and had been able to gather in only scanty supplies, in spite of this fertile country being still inhabited and its people being not, in the main, ill-disposed if they were not too much molested. The Governor had known of our retreat only five days before² and had taken all possible steps to bake for the rear-guard and supply their other needs, to whom everything had in due course been sent. He had few bakers, and the rapid movements of the army had prevented his executives (who, in any case, existed virtually only in name) from making arrangements for baking in advance; and thus we could not take full advantage of even such resources as the town could have furnished. Everyone thought of his own safety; and marching as quickly as possible seemed the great secret of escaping danger. How could one obtain organized service from the bakers and other workers so long as this frame of mind brought an extremity of disorder?

¹ Henri-François-Marie Charpentier, who was born on June 23, 1769, at Soissons, and appointed Général de Division on February 16, 1804, had been in the course of this campaign Chief-of-Staff of the 4th Corps, Governor of Witepsk, and lastly, after the departure of Baraguey d'Hilliers, Governor of Smolensk. He died on October 14, 1831, at Oigny, near Villers-Cotterets.

² He had been notified in a letter from Berthier, from Wiasma, on November 1st. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 336.)

Many of even the superior officers, quite destitute, set an example in this general rout, and, leaving their units, ran by themselves to the head of the column to get something to eat.

Our arrival and stay at Smolensk were notable for the fresh disasters which befell the Emperor and the army. For one may justly apply that term to an affair which, in addition to exposing our flank, deprived us of the reinforcements of fresh troops which should have restored the morale of our men and have checked an enemy as exhausted as ourselves. The Emperor must have been counting on Baraguay d'Hillier's corps, which, newly arrived from France, he had ordered to take up a position on the road to Yelnia. But the advance-guard of this army occupied a weak position at Ljachewo, under the command of General Augereau, who had made a bad survey of his ground and a worse disposition of his troops. He was surrounded, attacked, and taken prisoner.¹ Seeing that he put out no guards, the enemy, who had him under observation and were also kept informed by the peasantry, took advantage of this omission; and General Augereau, with more than 2000 men, surrendered to an advance-guard of the Russians, of which he should have taken more than half as prisoners if only he had remembered the name he bore.² This reverse was a disaster on more than one score. Not only did it rob us of a needed reinforcement of fresh troops, and lose the stores collected at that point, which would have been very valuable to us; but it also encouraged the enemy, who, in spite of our misfortunes and the privations added to our exhaustion at Moscow, were not accustomed to such successes. The Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel openly attributed this incident to the lack of foresight of General Baraguay d'Hilliers, who had not, they declared, given personal attention to any of the

¹ Augereau's brigade was surrounded on November 9th, at Ljachewo, by the irregular troops raised by d'Orloff-Denissoff.

² Jean-Pierre Augereau, born at Paris on September 27, 1772, was the brother of the Duke of Castiglione. General of Brigade from May 8, 1804, he was made Lieutenant-General on January 27, 1815, and died at Paris on September 25, 1836.

dispositions:¹ and above all they attributed it to the incapacity of General Augereau. The officers who had been on the spot spoke very bitterly of the affair and made no excuse for the Generals. As for the Emperor, he laid upon this incident the responsibility for the continued retreat which he perceived was necessary: and for the abandoning of Smolensk, where, until a few days, or perhaps even a few moments, before he had hoped to establish the main base of his advance-guard while he was in winter quarters.

This incident, the loss of Witepsk² and the set-back to the Viceroy of which we learnt on the following day,³ were the first shocks which really opened the Emperor's eyes to his situation and the possible consequences of our misfortunes. From that moment he realized the impossibility of going into quarters at Witepsk and Orcha, as he spoke of doing up to forty-eight hours before. He learned also that the Duke of Elchingen, who was acting as rear-guard, had been hotly engaged by the Cossacks before Dorogobouje.⁴ Everything seemed to fall upon the Emperor at once, as though to crush him, during his halt at Smolensk. As the incidents I have just mentioned forbade his carrying out the plan of going into quarters at Smolensk he had to recall the Viceroy. The

¹ General Baraguay d'Hilliers was sent back to France "under the disgrace of an order-of-the-day by which he was to consider himself under arrest in his own house." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 296.) On November 11th Napoleon ordered that the division should be disbanded and sent Baraguay d'Hilliers to Königsberg. On the 13th he ordered an inquiry, and its conclusions were unfavourable to the General, who was then ordered to hold himself under arrest on one of his own properties in France. By his death on January 16, 1813, he avoided still more serious proceedings against him.

² Witepsk was taken by storm by a detachment of Wittgenstein's army commanded by General Harpe, on November 7th. This compelled the Emperor to continue his retreat by way of Orcha, instead of by the outward route.

³ On November 9th, Eugène had reached the Vop, which was in flood. Caulaincourt describes a little later on what then took place. On that day the 3rd lost 60 cannon.

⁴ Cf. Fezensac, *Journal*, 82.

particulars he received of the losses suffered by the Viceroy in carrying out the movement were disheartening; but it was some consolation that these were at least honourable losses.

On the 9th, the 4th Corps was held up in its movement to rejoin us by the marshy banks of the Vop. There being no bridge, the Italian Guard waded across, despite the blocks of ice and the presence of an enemy superior in numbers. The artillery was bogged, and, as the overdriven and exhausted horses could not pull it out, after several useless attempts much of it had to be abandoned. Everything had been done that courage could do when inspired by the example of a gallant and devoted commander; but it was in vain. On the 10th, attacked on every side by superior forces, the Italian infantry covered themselves with glory. In the rear they beat off Platow's swarm of Cossacks, while at the head of the line they drove into the cavalry under Ilovasiki which tried to bar their way and prevent their entry into Dukhovchtina. There the Viceroy established his headquarters, thence proceeding to Smolensk to rejoin the army.

Kutusoff's proclamation to his army, issued at Spas on October 31st, reached the Emperor during his stay at Smolensk.¹

¹ The date of this proclamation is additional proof that Kutusoff, despite the foresight for which he gave himself so much credit in the accounts published since the event, was so far from foreseeing our retreat that he did not even know of it until the 27th. One may even question whether he then believed in it. He must have been eager to publish such important news, but his proclamation is dated no earlier than the 31st:

KUTUSOFF'S PROCLAMATION

"At the moment when the enemy entered Moscow all the wild hopes he entertained vanished before his eyes. There he expected plenty and security; there he was bereft of all the necessities of life. Worn with long and incessant marching, exhausted through lack of food, harassed by our raiding parties, who cut off the few supplies that were coming to him, he lost thousands of his soldiers, who fell to the swords of irregulars and in no honourable fight. No prospect faced him but the vengeance of a nation that had sworn to annihilate his army. Every Russian showed him a hero

Continued overleaf

He did everything possible to reorganize the different units, without delaying the march of the army as a whole. Many rations were distributed, and steps were taken for further distributions at Orcha and the other places which the Emperor thought were better stocked with provisions. He also busied himself with removing the little there was in the arsenal, as though the army had not already more equipment than the teams could draw, and as though these trophies, as he called whatever we abandoned, when left at Smolensk would have more value for the enemy than what we strewed every day along the roads. Clinging to the idea that he was going into quarters, the Emperor could not or would not show a trace of

in whom his false promises had bred both contempt and horror; indeed every rank of citizen in the constitution of our Empire has united to present an unsurpassable barrier to his efforts. After incurring losses beyond counting, he has seen at last, but too late, the folly of his hope that the foundations of the Empire could be shaken by the taking of Moscow. There remained no safety for him save in hasty flight. He therefore evacuated Moscow on the 11th-23rd of this month, abandoning his wounded to the vengeance of an angry people.

"The hideous excesses of which he was guilty in the capital are already sufficiently known, and have stamped every Russian heart with a strong will to vengeance. In the very moment of his going he showed his baffled anger by the destruction of the Kremlin. There the divine power intervened for us, and saved the cathedral and our holy shrines.

"We must hasten in pursuit of this sacrilegious enemy, while other armies, in Lithuania, work with us for his destruction. Already he is in headlong flight. He is burning his wagons, abandoning his baggage and the treasure his impious hands have snatched from the very altars of the Lord. Desertion and famine spread confusion around him. The murmuring of his soldiers rises behind him like the mutter of threatening waves.

"While this hideous clamour escorts the French retreat, in the ears of the Russians there rings the spirited voice of their monarch. Soldiers, hear the words he speaks to you: 'Quench the flames of Moscow with the enemy's blood.' Russians, obey that solemn order. Then your country, satisfied with this just revenge, will retire contented from the field of war, and, behind its vast frontiers, take up its noble stance between Peace and Glory.

"Soldiers of Russia, God is your guide."

(*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

foresight. There is no doubt that we should have preserved much more undamaged if we had made the necessary sacrifices in time. But to two or three unfortunate horses we allotted guns and wagons that needed six; and by not abandoning one or two guns and wagons at the proper time, we lost four or five a few days later. We planned for the day only; and because we refused, as the saying is, to pay dues to the devil, we paid heavily in the end to the enemy.

It seemed as if the Emperor were expecting some miracle to alter the climate and end the ruin that was descending on us from every side. He gave his whole attention to the Guard, whom he hoped to save from the general disaster because they were still holding together. One of the Generals commanding the artillery of this corps made so bold one day as to suggest the sacrifice of a few guns, in order not to exhaust the teams, already over driven and reduced below the number needed. But he was not listened to. The Generals and officers saw the evils of the situation but, just because they could see no issue, did nothing to preserve for a few days longer what they knew must in a few more days be lost. Speaking generally, they were so tired of war, craved so much for rest, for the sight of a less hostile country, for an end to these far-flung expeditions, that most of them let themselves be blinded as to the present fruits and future consequences of our disasters, by the thought that they would prove a useful lesson to the Emperor, and one that would cool his ambition. This was the common view. One can imagine its effect upon the unavoidable difficulties of our situation, which for want of checking they merely increased. One would have thought from the conduct and the indifference of many people that the lesson could not be too severe: one would not have guessed it was by the spending of French blood that misfortune instructed the Emperor. As the Emperor could see our sorry plight, living and marching in the midst of disorder and desolation, even the most public-spirited held themselves exempt from speaking about them, or indeed from taking any notice of them.

Alas, the Emperor deluded himself; and our ruin followed on his misfortune. The leaders saw safety for the future in

the very extremity of our misfortune: the Emperor saw the misfortune much smaller than it was. He really still believed that he was coming to the end of his losses, that he would be able to halt and reorganize the army. This is amply proved by his fatal insistence that everything should be brought away and everything preserved, which only resulted in everything being lost. Fortune had so long showered favours on him that he could not believe she had now deserted him. The cold, though already severe, was endurable. Everyone liked to think, as did the Emperor, that it would not increase before we were in quarters. No one at that time had any desire beyond finding stores, and in them a sure supply of food. It would indeed have been at this time a cure for all our woes. It was evident we were now in better country. The Russians had pursued us so half-heartedly, and they disturbed our march so little, by comparison with what they might have attempted, that we thought they must be in as much need of rest as ourselves. The supplies we had been able to procure at Smolensk, and the slight rise in the temperature, had lightened everyone's spirits, and restored even the most faint-hearted. Men thought they were nearing harbour, and in expectation of arriving there within a few days, they mustered all their remaining strength.

During this time I was employed night and day in reorganizing the Emperor's carriages. I had sent ahead orders for the forging of shoes with three calkins for all the horses. By means of a heavy payment I was even able to employ the workmen of the arsenal on this work during the night. By day they were working for the artillery. I stocked the carriages with all the provisions I could obtain with ready money. I had a great number of carts and carriages burnt: a measure I had already been gradually carrying out for the last ten days, as the horses gradually died. In this way I spared the reserves. The Emperor found it very hard to consent to this; and seeing his reluctance, I no longer told him anything. I took everything upon myself, and I preserved, over and above the transports for the food and the wounded, only the carriage which carried MM. de Beauvau, de Mailly, and de Bausset. This

last-named had the gout.¹ I had set the example: everyone abandoned his lame or exhausted horses. In the end, after a stay of forty-eight hours, the carriages were lined up for the march in fairly good order. The horses were all shod. The farriers had worked day and night. I supervised all these details myself, and to these precautions I owed the safety of all the men in my command, who received their rations as far as Wilna.

During his stay in Smolensk, the Emperor rode out each day, visiting the town and its surroundings as though he would have liked to preserve these also. He was already gravely concerned, and became more so after the Viceroy's affair. The state in which he saw the army in its march through the town convinced him, I think, that our plight was worse than he had been willing to admit to himself. However he still heartened himself with thinking that the consequences would not be so gloomy as at that time they were expected to be. He did not doubt that he would be able to put the army into quarters as soon as he had joined the Volhynia and Dwina corps. He was expecting the arrival of the Polish Cossack levies which he had announced we should find near Smolensk. Was he misled in this respect, or did he announce this reinforcement to create an illusory hope in the minds of the rest? I do not know. The fact remains, however, that in Poland they were not busying themselves overmuch about these levies. Our communications had been intercepted for several days; we had no news from France, from Wilna, or even from the Dwina corps.

These circumstances were among the Emperor's chief cares; he showed, however, a firmness of character and an impassibility which sometimes irritated those who approached him, but was calculated to encourage those who were most downcast. All those who had money (and everyone had a certain amount) found supplies at Smolensk. Provisions had arrived there from France for the Emperor's household, together with rice and many other foodstuffs for the army. The Emperor's

¹ "Bausset has the gout. We travel on foot, and he cries out that it's murder." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 184.)

wine-merchant, who had imported into Smolensk as a speculation a great quantity of wines, brandy and liqueurs, sold his entire stock for its weight in gold. We had already suffered so much that even the rank and file spent all they had to procure a bottle of brandy.

The Emperor left Smolensk on the 11th, after ensuring a sufficient supply of flour for the Duke of Elchingen, who, acting as rear-guard, was due to arrive that same night. We halted at Korytnia, which we reached comparatively early.¹ The road was very hilly, and so difficult that we outstripped the carriages which had left the day before. It was simply a sheet of ice; and the steep slopes, frequently found in that part of the country, were already littered with abandoned horses who had been unable to struggle to their feet. The leaders were so heedless, the riders and drivers of the wagons so tired, and their time so filled with marching and searching for food, that neither the artillery nor the cavalry had a single horse shod for ice. Most of our losses must be attributed to this want of shoeing: that is, to our lack of foresight. The forges had been abandoned on the road. Those of the inhabitants had been stripped of tools and bellows; our farriers had no nails, and could find neither iron nor coals. These things were so scarce that even the arsenal at Smolensk was short of them, and I had to send an escort to fetch them from three leagues away, at the risk of seeing them carried off by the Cossacks who had made the expedition against the Viceroy and were pressing us from all sides.

An hour after we arrived at Korytnia we learnt that, one league from where we were, the Cossacks had just attacked a small artillery park and the convoy of soldiers who were bringing back the trophies from Moscow: also the Emperor's carriages, which we had passed, and which had just joined this park. They had taken advantage of the moment when, the column having halted in order to double-up the teams for the ascent of one of those mountains of ice, there was a space

¹ Napoleon left Smolensk at half-past eight in the morning, and established the imperial headquarters that night in a ruin at Korytnia, six leagues from the first-named town.

between the front and rear of the column and the small detachments guarding it could not defend the whole of it. The Cossacks captured about ten horses and some of the Emperor's transports. These they only robbed of their contents, because the drivers in their fright had upset them into a ravine. The wagon containing the maps was among these. The Cossacks scattered everything, but took little away. Nearly everything would have been recovered had not a second set-to at the head of the column so terrified the drivers that they dropped everything that hampered their running. Our own stragglers completed the pillage; for we learned afterwards, but too late to recover the goods, that the Cossacks, on seeing some troops approaching, had immediately retired. The artillery lost half its teams; and most of the officers attached to headquarters, myself amongst them, lost their personal effects.¹

The loss of the maps would naturally annoy the Emperor greatly, but he showed no dissatisfaction, even against his own servants. This incident made everyone more cautious, and had the advantage of bringing back to the road, for some forty-eight hours, many of those who had gone aside for food. Our situation was such that one is forced to question whether it was really advantageous to rally-in wretches whom we could not feed! The difficulty of making the scanty artillery still attached to the various units keep pace with them greatly reduced the rate of march. It would have meant covering no more than three leagues a day, and the marches were of necessity twice that length, as the time of year, in addition to military considerations, was forcing us to hurry.

During the night the Emperor sent for me, and spoke to me, as on an earlier occasion, about the necessity of his return to France. He again brought up all the questions he had already put to me concerning the army, the journey across

¹ This incident took place at Krasnoë, which was defended by Sébastiani. Among the trophies lost was the cross of Ivan Veliki, which Napoleon had intended for the dome of the Invalides. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 187.)

Prussia, and the rest, and asked me if I had given thought to the plan. He was beginning to appreciate the disorganization of the army, but heartened himself with thinking that making contact with the corps which we should find on the Beresina would quickly restore order; for these troops, which were well organized, would act as a rear-guard and hold our position while he rallied the troops from Moscow. He still railed against General Baraguay d'Hilliers, to whose faulty dispositions he attributed the loss of the greater part of the corps which had been at Smolensk. He blamed the General for his being now compelled to continue his retreat and abandon the line of Witepsk-Orcha, which till then he had cherished the thought of maintaining.

The disappointment which necessarily followed on this change in the plans for winter quarters—plans that had been too confidently announced—and the effect upon the army of these various incidents, were not one of the least causes of the dissatisfaction shown by the Emperor.

"Since Baylen," he repeated, "there has been no example of a surrender like that, in open country."

He talked again to me about those Polish Cossacks who should, he said, join us within a few days. He enumerated the detachments which had reinforced the Prince of Schwarzenberg and the other corps, and mentioned with satisfaction those which would follow in course, of which some had already left Wilna and others were about to start. The Emperor still flattered himself that he could restore matters, and that he could even take up an imposing attitude as soon as he had the stores of Minsk under his hand.

"With every step I take, I shall find reinforcements," he told me, "while Kutusoff, who will likewise be worn out with marching, will be getting further away from his reserves. He will be left in a countryside which we have exhausted. For us there are stores to hand. The Russians out there will die of hunger."

Alas, fate and misfortunes had pursued us and tried the Emperor in every possible way. We learned soon after that the stores of which he spoke with such confidence, which he

thought were the anchor of the army's safety, fell the next day, the 16th, into the hands of the enemy.¹

Although he tried to convey to others a different impression, the Emperor was painfully disturbed. The lack of news from France caused him the most annoyance, and this he did not disguise from me. We were reduced to sending off little notes to Wilna every day or two by the hand of Poles, or other people whom we tried to make reliable by heavy rewards. Often we asked no more of them than to take a trifling note to some posting-station whose communications with Germany were still open. One day we paid a Jew 2500 francs to send through a few lines to the Arch-Chancellor. M. Daru, who sent it off, took advantage of the opportunity to write a few lines at the same time to his wife: and only these arrived. How? The Countess herself did not know. She had a letter from her husband, while the Empress had not a word from the Emperor.² The Police and the Post Office were thrown into a state of agitation. M. Daru's letter, which, as one would expect, was very reassuring, first delighted his family and then created a sensation in Paris. Mme Daru showed it round, and her husband's handwriting was too well known for there to be any question of its authenticity. Guesses ran wild. Of the many despatches sent off by officers in disguise or by natives of the country, only one or two reached their destination. As public affairs were mentioned only in cypher, the Emperor attached no importance to these letters except for the purpose of giving news to people in Paris and Wilna about the army and their relatives there; and they did not receive the news.

Since the Viceroy had rejoined us³ we had marched in

¹ Minsk was indeed taken on November 16th by Tchitchagoff, before Dombrowski's division could reach the town.

² The Russians seized a letter from the Emperor to Marie Louise, dated from Smolensk on October 4, 1812, which has been published in the *Lettres interceptées par les Russes durant la campagne de 1812*, p. 315. The same volume contains on p. 239 an intercepted letter from Daru to his wife, dated from Smolensk on November 9th.

³ At Smolensk on November 13th.

single column and by the same road. One can imagine the confusion where the road narrowed. The road was a switch-back, and a sheet of ice on which even men on foot could hardly stand upright. Every moment carts and wagons were capsized on the ice and blocked the road. Everyone was in a hurry and no one troubled to maintain proper order. Sure of faulty obedience, and certain that any method they might establish would be only momentarily observed, the General Staff issued no instructions. As always, every freedom was allowed to the intelligence of the commanding officers, except that they could be corrected at need. The officers saw the evils of the situation, but, reflecting that as it would immediately reappear there was no point in righting it, they did nothing to check the disorganization, which consequently ran riot, because of the existing confusion and of infection from bad examples left unchecked. How indeed could one exact service, or any test of endurance, from a man whom one had to leave to starve, in weather that froze his fingers if he left them exposed to the air? How make any dispositions whatever during an unceasing march, and when the staff-officers have lost their horses and must go on foot to deliver the orders they carry, when all are crowded on to the same road, and flanked by Cossacks who hardly let them get ahead out of their sight?

There remained not a single brigade of cavalry in a fit state to cover our movements. The exhausted unshod horses could go no further unless men dragged them by the bridle. Without taking from the Guard, who were themselves much reduced, we had not enough strength in cavalry to carry out a reconnaissance far enough or boldly enough to give us definite news of the enemy's position. Indeed we did not attempt it: and this although the Emperor on the previous day anticipated that the enemy were moving to attempt an action against us.

Several cannon-shots fired on the Guard near Korytnia by a force believed to include some infantry confirmed the Emperor in his opinion that the enemy were about to attack. We discovered later that this was Ostermann's

corps.¹ He attempted nothing for the moment. We could not find a single peasant or man of any kind to act as guide. We had no means of information. Some detachments of Poles and of the Guard were sent out to scout, and returned after putting to the sword a few Cossacks whom they drove back upon a larger body, from which they were themselves obliged to retreat. They did not bring back a single Cossack to give us information about the troops in our neighbourhood. We were like men in close confinement when they are allowed to take the air; we knew nothing of what was going on around us. The Emperor had remarked to us as early as Smolensk that the success of the Russians against Baraguay d'Hilliers would go to their heads, and that Kutusoff would be forced out of his inaction. He was not mistaken; but the unity and soldierly conduct of the Guard reassured him as to the consequences of an engagement, of whatever kind it might be.

¹ The affair in question is the first battle of Krasnoë, on November 14th. The Guard made accidental contact with a corps detached from Kutusoff's army, under the command of Ostermann-Tolstoi.

CHAPTER II

From Krasnoë to Smorgoni

WHILST we were at Korytnia, General Ojarowski entered Krasnoë¹ and there captured an Italian battalion:² that is a hundred men, for our battalions were by now hardly equivalent to a company. The arrival on the scene of a detachment of the Guard made him hastily withdraw, and he fell back on to Kutkowo.

On the 15th [November], headquarters continued the advance towards Krasnoë.³ As I have already pointed out, we were moving too rapidly for the artillery and transport. The result was that the regiments in the rear, which had been instructed to offer resistance to the enemy, were greatly delayed by the necessity of rallying stragglers and collecting together everything that had been left behind. Even the little artillery which these regiments still had, and which it was so important for them to keep, was a source of embarrassment, because of the condition of the roads and the weakness of the horses.

As we approached Krasnoë, we came into contact with Miloradovitch's army, which consisted of Ostermann's⁴ and

¹ Ojarowski, who entered Krasnoë with 1200 infantry and artillery, was driven out by the arrival of the Claparède division. Adam Petrovitch Ojarowski (1776-November 1866), a colonel in 1802, a major-general in 1807. After having organized the Drissa camp, he commanded a regiment attached to the Miloradovitch army.

² Cavalry without mounts attached to Sébastiani's regiment. This small body of men had taken refuge in a church, and had barricaded themselves in there.

³ The Emperor started from Smolensk before nine o'clock and arrived at Krasnoë at three o'clock.

⁴ Alexander Ivanovitch Ostermann-Tolstoi (1770—died at Saconnaz (Switzerland) on January 30, 1857), major-general 1798, general aide-de-camp March 5, 1814, infantry general August 17, 1817. He lost his left arm at Kulm in 1813.

Ojarowski's divisions with the addition of some cavalry, and which had taken up its position near the village of Merlino on the left of the road. The Young Guard and the Dutch section of the Old Guard under the command of the Duke of Treviso were sent to oppose this force. They checked the Russians, and held them off so successfully that our progress along the road was not interrupted.¹

The Emperor made for the place where this engagement happened, remaining there as long as things looked serious. M. Giroud, my aide-de-camp, was mortally wounded by a bullet that hit him in the upper part of his thigh.² At first the Emperor was inclined to believe that this attack was an offensive on the part of the whole enemy army; but Miloradovitch's indecision, and his withdrawal as soon as we took action, persuaded him that it was merely the skirmishing of an isolated body of troops, with the object of harassing and delaying us whilst Kutusoff advanced the main body of his army against us. On first sighting the enemy, the Emperor had sent orders to Marshals Davout and Ney to quicken their pace. He repeated these orders, and made up his mind to stop his retreat until he had more certain information about Kutusoff's movements, and about the movements of our own troops still in the rear.

¹ "Miloradovitch with a force of 20,000 men did not dare to bar the road. All he did was to fire a few rounds." (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 398).

² "The Emperor's Chief-of-Staff in this day's fighting had lost Captain Giroud, an efficient and brave officer. Returning from the rear-guard, he wanted to force his way at the head of a certain number of men who'd got detached and whom he'd collected together, and was mortally wounded with grape-shot." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 189.) François Marie Giroud entered the service in May 1786, in the Légion de Maillebois, sub-lieutenant in the *Corps des Guides* of the German Army until the dissolution of this corps (9 Ventôse, year VI), lieutenant aide-de-camp to General Foulér, October 7, 1810, captain deputy chief-of-staff in the Portuguese army, April 6, 1811. When he obtained permission to return to France on March 3, 1812, he was again Foulér's aide-de-camp, then Caulaincourt's. He died as a result of his wounds on November 22nd. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

Reports about the enemy forces facing us indicated to the Emperor that they were considerable; reports reaching us from the lines of march proved that our communications were being frequently cut by Russian contingents. We even knew from information given by stragglers that villages on our left, at a short distance from the road, were occupied by enemy infantry. All these facts determined the Emperor to stay at Krasnoë on the 16th, and prepare for a battle. Convinced that the only way of driving the enemy off and preventing them from continuing to harass us, and, at the same time, of rescuing his own troops in the rear, was to take a vigorous offensive against the Russians, thus convincing them that neither our courage nor our bayonets had been frozen with the cold, the Emperor decided on a surprise night attack. His first intention was to put General Rapp in charge, and he even gave him his instructions. Later, however, he changed his mind, and entrusted the direction of the expedition to General Roguet,¹ who attacked Ojarowski's forces two hours before daybreak on the 16th. He killed or took prisoner most of his infantry, and drove him as far as Lukino.² This successful and daring action forced the enemy to withdraw; but the Emperor, having gathered from prisoners that the whole Russian Army was in the vicinity, decided to take the offensive, there being no other means of safeguarding the Viceroy and his troops. The Emperor, who was in the plain with the troops, was uneasy about the Prince's failure to arrive; his instructions had been to follow our own progress. But he had only been able to set out from Smolensk late on the 15th, contenting himself with bivouacking at Lubnja, and had made contact with Miloradovich's forces drawn up for battle on the 16th. Stragglers, thrown back on to his vanguard by this

¹ François Roguet, born at Toulouse on November 12, 1770, died in Paris on December 4, 1846, General of Division June 24, 1811, commanded the light infantry division of the Young Guard.

² Third battle of Krasnoë, night of the 15th-16th November. See description in *Mémoires militaires du lieutenant-Général Comte Roguet*, IV, 515.

enemy force, had been the first to inform him of its existence. His vanguard, finding the enemy in strength and in position, had been forced to wait for the main body of his troops, which the Viceroy had got into formation, at the same time quickening his pace; but being practically without artillery, he could not risk a decisive engagement with forces so superior to his own. Surrounded by a swarm of enemies, his troops carried out their duties coolly and efficiently.

General Guilleminot, his Chief-of-Staff, was in the vanguard, and rallied all the stragglers thrown back on to it. His presence of mind consolidated and saved this small body of men, though he was often cut off from the 4th Corps by enemy cavalry. The Viceroy held his position until nightfall, when he took advantage of the darkness to make his way to Krasnoë, arriving there late because he had to strike out to the right of the road.¹

The Emperor knew, from the sound of firing and from stragglers, of the attack directed against the Viceroy, whose delayed arrival made him uneasy; and he ordered General Durosnel, one of his aides-de-camp, to take two battalions of light infantry from his Guard,² with two cannons, and to go ahead of him so as to help the Viceroy to make his way through. General Durosnel, at the head of this body of troops, commanded by General Boyer,³ had barely passed the Emperor's rear-guard emplacement when he came in contact with a horde of Cossacks, who made off at his approach. He was marching to the left of the road in order to carry out his manoeuvres more easily. Half-way to Katowia, he saw within cannon-range a strong line of cavalry drawn up for battle on

¹ After his excellent flanking manoeuvre, Eugène arrived at Krasnoë with the relics of his army two hours after nightfall.

² It was two squadrons of the 1st Regiment of the Polish Light Horse Lancers of the Guard, supported by a battalion of the Old Guard. See Désiré Chlapowski, *Mémoires sur les guerres de Napoléon*, p. 285.

³ Pierre-François-Xavier Boyer, nicknamed "Peter-the-Cruel," born at Belfort on September 7, 1772, died at Lardy (Seine-et-Oise) on July 11, 1851, General of Brigade March 29, 1801, and of Division February 16, 1814.

the other side of the road. Following suit, he formed his men into a square, and fired a few cannon-shots to find out the intentions of this force, which replied to his fire but took no other action. General Durosnel, aware of the importance of the diversion he had been instructed to carry out, and full of confidence in the veterans he commanded, had no hesitation in continuing with his march, leaving this body of enemy cavalry behind him. When he had almost reached a narrow pass where he supposed, from the vigorous firing that he heard, the Viceroy to be in action and the enemy in strong force, he told off three Polish lancers of the Guard to attempt a detour of the ravine on the left, make contact with the Viceroy, and inform him that he was on the way to assist him in reaching Krasnoë, where the Emperor awaited him.

Having come within sight of the Russians, General Durosnel had barely time to fire a round from each of his cannons, and to form his men again into a square, when he was attacked by numerous cavalry and artillery fire. The cavalry vainly attempted to break up his formation; their charges were repulsed with as much coolness as bravery. The enemy, however, was continually being reinforced, and had spread over the whole countryside. It was thus impossible to delay a retreat without risking 600 men belonging to the only regiment—the Guard, noted for its bravery—that was left intact on the whole army. He therefore began to retreat in good order. Although vigorously attacked, and pursued for a league, he carried out his movements slowly, and in so orderly a manner that at last the enemy cavalry ceased their attacks. Cannon-fire cost him several men. He rejoined the army just when General de Latour-Maubourg was setting off with his cavalry regiment,¹ with instructions to relieve him.

The Emperor, perturbed at the thought of a part of his Guard being in action and cut off from the main body of the army—no reconnoitring party sent out had been able to break through to General Durosnel's contingent—was delighted at the safe return of this detachment. He was even more delighted at the arrival of the Viceroy, who had been helped to

¹ 4th Cavalry Regiment.

extricate himself by the diversion created by General Durosnel, and invited him to supper, as well as the General, whom he praised several times.

This turn of events, which upset all the Emperor's calculations, and which, if the enemy had had even a little determination, might on the lowest estimate have endangered all our troops in the rear, would have overwhelmed any other General; but the Emperor was stronger than adversity, and became the more determined as danger seemed more imminent. Bracing himself against his bad fortune, he resolved to fight rather than to abandon Marshals Davout and Ney.¹ He reiterated his earlier orders to quicken their pace. But was the road free? And if the orders reached them, would they arrive in time?

The Emperor had expected some sort of partial attack, and could not understand the Russian tactics. He could not believe, as prisoners reported, that the whole of Kutusoff's army was concentrated in the vicinity, and ordered them to be interrogated by several persons, always convinced, as he said again and again (for instance, the evening before to the Prince of Neuchâtel, Duroc and myself), that the present attack was simply an attempt on the part of a detachment told off by Kutusoff to hold up, or at least delay, his progress, if it were impossible to make him change his course, the object being to get ahead of us and, at the same time, to muster behind us either the Moldavian Army, or reserves which the Russians probably had in this district and had been instructed by their commander-in-chief to mobilize.

"Kutusoff would never make the mistake of following behind me along a devastated road if he had not some big project up his sleeve," the Emperor said. "If Miloradovich had even a tolerably large force at his disposal, he wouldn't have given way before a few battalions of the Young Guard."

All these considerations conflicted in the Emperor's mind with the reports of the prisoners, and with his wish to come to blows, paying with one vigorous battle (he had no doubts

¹ Still between Smolensk and Korytnia.

about his being successful in it) for the tranquillity required for his retreat.

"The distance between Junot and the rear-guard," the Emperor said again, "is so great that it is impossible to give any real help. If we stop and wait when there's nothing to eat, we risk everything, or rather lose everything, as we cannot possibly achieve the desired result in that way. How will the troops be kept alive who are left standing? It is only twenty-four hours since we arrived, and everyone is dying of hunger. If I take the offensive against the Russians, they will withdraw. I shall have wasted my time, and they will have got ahead of us."

Notwithstanding these reflections, the Guard had been ordered to retreat along the Smolensk road; strong batteries had been placed in position, and everything was prepared for a battle on the 17th. Although he had less than 20,000 men, the Emperor had decided to come to grips with the enemy, and was full of confidence in his veterans, whom he had doubtless kept in reserve for such a desperate venture. He had no doubts about his success, and believed, as in happier times, that his luck would hold.

Returning, however, on the 17th, to his original plan, he ordered the Duke of Abrantès and the Viceroy to march on to Liadouï whilst he arranged demonstrations, which he hoped would make it possible for his Marshals to get clear of the enemy. On one occasion he remarked to the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself that he had made up his mind to continue the retreat, including the Guard, if the Russians did not defend their positions on the Smolensk road. This condition was fulfilled, as Miloradovich withdrew his forces.¹ Thus the Emperor, confident that his repeated orders had reached Eckmühl and Elchingen, and that they would join us that evening or night, ordered the Old Guard to participate in the march on Liadouï. The Duke of Treviso, with some Dutch troops and the Young Guard, was ordered to hold the

¹ Fifth battle of Krasnoë—"The two parties fired on each other for two hours without any decisive result being achieved." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, p. 65.)

position until nightfall, and was joined after dinner by the Prince of Eckmühl, who, having received the Emperor's orders and sent them on to the Duke of Elchingen, had bivouacked on the 16th beyond Korytnia. But realizing how important it was to press on, he only stopped for a few hours, keeping the Duke of Elchingen informed of his movements.

While the Emperor was defying adversity at Krasnoë, and while the Russians were profiting so little from their advantages, the Duke of Elchingen, in command of the rear-guard, where there was fighting every day, only arrived at Smolensk on the 15th, in consequence of a somewhat severe action on the 13th.¹ He found that Smolensk had been looted, according to his account by soldiers of the 1st Corps, and according to the Prince of Eckmühl's account by stragglers. The fact is that the soldiers of the 3rd Corps, who counted on finding bread, only found disorder, shops practically empty, provisions scattered about the streets, the town full of stragglers who had just finished ransacking it, no one in authority, and no preparations made for feeding the rear-guard troops. In consequence of all this, no one wanted to remain there. The commissariat authorities had fled with the staff headquarters, and had even abandoned 5000 to 6000 sick or wounded who, as we found out later, when the 3rd Army left, fell victims to the fury of the Russians.

The Duke of Elchingen, who had been instructed to destroy the artillery abandoned at Smolensk and to blow up the ramparts, had thus to find means of ensuring the subsistence of his troops as far as Orcha. This vital consideration, which inevitably prolonged his stay in Smolensk, could not in the circumstances be sacrificed to any other, in view of the fact that his troops, obliged to fight each step of their way, had nothing to hope for from the places they would pass through, as they would pass through them after everyone else. It should also be realized that the rear-guard had to march amidst the fires and general destruction which everywhere marked the track of our stragglers. Such was the situation facing the

¹ He had been engaged on that day in a violent rear-guard action against General Chakovskoi.

Duke of Elchingen, who had received the Emperor's various orders, and, in the evening, the Prince of Eckmühl's letter advising him of what was happening on the road, and informing him that, in order not to jeopardize his troops and give the enemy a chance of rallying, he proposed to speed up his march, and that he would be well advised to do likewise. Marshal Ney however, could not start before nightfall.¹ Threatened on the one hand by the very real danger of his troops being demoralized through lack of food supplies, and on the other of being attacked by superior enemy forces, he decided on the course of action most in keeping with his own daring and with the proved courage of his men.

"All the Cossacks and Russians in the world," he cried when he received Marshal Davout's last message, "shall not prevent me from rejoining the army."

He was as good as his word, and proved that courage like his makes everything possible.

The various considerations which led the Emperor to believe that haste was necessary have been pointed out above, as well as the course of action he adopted on a basis of these considerations. He believed that by forcing the enemy to withdraw from the road,² he had done everything a General could do in so difficult a situation. Obsessed with the idea that Kutusoff's object was to steal several marches on him, and that therefore the general good demanded that he should accelerate his own progress, he rejoined the Guard and his staff headquarters at Liadouï.³ On the way to Liadouï he learnt from stragglers,

¹ During the night 16th-17th, or, more exactly, the morning of the 17th.

² It is now known that on the 17th, Kutusoff, seeing Napoleon march against him in the direction of Kutkovo, and believing that the main body of the French Army had already gone by, had abandoned his projected offensive against Krasnoë, had brought Milororadovich from the right wing nearer to his own forces, and had stopped Tormasov's advance along the road to the west of Krasnoë. Thus, by his manœuvre, the Emperor had induced Kutusoff to leave the road clear.

³ After having participated in certain demonstrations against the enemy, the Emperor returned to Krasnoë on the 17th at 11 a.m. and set out again for Liadouï, four leagues from Krasnoë.

who had been at the supply depots, that the Russians had a lot of infantry and cavalry at Dobroë. A peasant who was brought to him in the night assured him even that on the previous day he had passed a large number of Russian troops at Romanowo¹—a fact which would have confirmed his supposition that Kutusoff's object was to occupy the advance posts.

The Emperor summoned me at four o'clock in the morning. After repeating what he had already told us on preceding evenings, and having reiterated the various considerations that led him to take his decisions, he expressed regret that he had allowed a gap of twenty-four hours between the departure of one regiment and another from Smolensk, and that he had not ordered Junot and a section of the Guard to start their march earlier, so as to cover Orcha. His announced intention was to speed up the pace of the retreat.

The forces left in position to cover Krasnoc had orders to await the arrival of Marshal Davout's column, it being assumed that, in view of the last orders sent to him, he would only march in conjunction with Marshal Ney. Communications had almost broken down; the despatch of orders and reports was next to impossible, or took place so slowly that they rarely arrived in time to be useful. Staff officers, having for the most part lost their horses, went on foot; and even those who had kept their horses were unable to make them walk on ice, and so arrived no sooner than the others. The frost was more severe than ever, and the road therefore more difficult; the country was more hilly, and steep descents impracticable. It is impossible to form any idea of the difficulties that the artillery and transport had to surmount on this march, or of the number of horses lost by the former. We reached our destination² by a road that descended so steeply, that was so sunken, and a part of whose frozen surface had been so polished by the large number of horses and men who

¹ South of Liadouï.

² Liadouï.

had slipped on it, that we were obliged, like everyone else, to sit down and slide on our posteriors.¹ The Emperor had to do likewise, as the many arms that were offered to him provided no adequate support—a fact which will give some idea of the plight of the soldiers with their rifles and equipment, of the cavalymen whose horses, by reason of their weight, rolled faster than they did, and so came near to crushing them.

At Liadouï there were inhabitants and some food supplies.² Chickens and ducks ran about in the courtyards, to everyone's great astonishment. We had seen no such signs of plenty since crossing the Niemen; and every face cheered up, and everyone began to think that our privations were at last at an end. I mention these details in the course of describing our grave situation, because they bear on it, and because small things have a great influence on Frenchmen, whose spirits are quick to rise and fall. In the eyes of men accustomed since Moscow to find only uninhabited places, devastated houses, corpses instead of living men and women, it was a great event to come upon occupied houses with something to eat for supper. The modest resources of Liadouï, combined with what money would buy in its neighbourhood, enabled a good number of men to take the edge off their appetites—men who scorned every sort of danger but who were reluctant to die of hunger, and wanted to live if only to be able to face new perils.

Cossacks kept up perpetual raids along the road, which they constantly crossed between one division and another, even, when there was a gap, between one regiment and another. Three determined men armed with rifles, however, were sufficient to keep them at a respectful distance; but wherever there was no shooting to fear, wherever transport wagons were moving along in disorder, or unarmed stragglers making

¹ "Above the little river that has to be crossed before arriving there, lay an exceptionally high plateau, its slope so slippery that the only way of getting down was rolling." (Labaume, *Relation circonstanciée*, p. 326.)

² "It was there that we found the first Polish Jews. We were greatly cheered by seeing people in the houses." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, p. 189.)

their way as best they could, the Cossacks improvised sudden attacks, wounding and robbing all those whose lives they spared, and looting wagons and carriages when they came upon them.

It is not difficult to imagine the perturbation spread by such tactics, and their effect on the army's morale. What was worse, they made communications extremely difficult, not only between one corps and another, but between one division and another. The General Staff, as I have already explained, received no reports; its orders either did not arrive at their destination, or arrived too late to be of any use; staff officers, who braved every sort of danger, were frequently captured. To make any progress at all, they had to attach themselves to some detachment, halt when it halted, and advance to rejoin another detachment when it advanced. Then there was the ice! Officers who had kept their horses were unable to make them move. They dragged them along behind, finding that they made better progress on foot. To form a true idea of this tremendous drama, it is necessary to have been present when it happened, to have taken part in it. Without exaggeration, the simplest things became almost unsurmountable difficulties. All honour, then, to the brave men of all ranks, of all classes, who would not let themselves be defeated! Never have men so severely tried acquitted themselves so well, or shown so much constancy and devotion. As dangers multiplied and, at the same time, difficulties were augmented, all eyes turned towards Orcha, which the Emperor, like everyone else, considered to be an important base. He had ordered the advance-guard to reach it as soon as possible, and had given instructions for the bridge-head to be strongly occupied.¹

We made our way from Liadouï to Doubrowna,² where on the following day³ in the morning just when we were about

¹ Berthier to Junot, November 17, 1812, 8 p.m.

² The Emperor started from Laidouï on November 18th at 5 a.m. and arrived at Doubrowna at 5 p.m. He stayed in Princess Lubomirska's manor-house.

³ November 19th.

to set out, the Emperor learned that the 1st Corps had joined the troops he had left at Krasnoë, in position and facing the enemy, to await its arrival, and that consequently this corps had passed through Krasnoë on the 17th,¹ the day on which it was possible that Marshal Ney had just left Smolensk. We knew nothing definite about the 3rd Corps, of which the 1st had had no news since the 6th. Not a single officer had returned. Had those sent with messages reached their destination? The Emperor was lost in conjectures. Miloradovich's remaining in his original position, and the departure of our own troops, made us realize all the dangers to which Marshal Ney was exposed.

The grave reproaches that the two Marshals have levelled against one another, the severe judgment of headquarters and the whole army in regard to one of them,² make it incumbent on me to report in this connection only the Emperor's own expressions, the Prince of Neuchâtel's private opinions, and details openly given to headquarters by trustworthy persons. The Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel said again and again that the two Marshals ought to march in concert and support one another; that, as Marshal Ney had to make the progress of his retreat depend on the obstacles with which the enemy confronted him, Marshal Davout should have modified his pace accordingly. But the two Marshals did not like one another, and, having had a difference of opinion about the looting of Smolensk, ceased to co-operate. While he was still in the hilly country round Smolensk, Marshal Davout received the order to accelerate his pace, and to pass on to Marshal Ney an order in the same sense. This he did,³ keeping the receipt for the order he had passed on, and the report of the officer who delivered it. The officer was received

¹ Davout with the 1st Corps passed through Krasnoë on the 17th, in the evening, on his way to Liadoui, following behind Mortier. He bivouacked between the two towns. Ney, with the 3rd Corps, left the outskirts of Smolensk early on the 17th. Thus, at this time, there was a considerable interval between the two Marshals.

² Davout.

³ The 16th, in the evening.

ungraciously enough by Marshal Ney, who said to him that, as for the order to hurry up his departure, "all the Russians on earth and all their Cossacks would not be strong enough to prevent him passing through them." Marshal Davout proposed that he should start that evening, and informed him that he was setting off at once to relieve Gérard's division, which he had drawn up in echelon along the road¹ on the previous day. Marshal Ney, delayed by the necessity of giving bread to his soldiers, paid no more attention to his second message than to his first.

Marshal Davout started off as he had said he would. He stopped for a few hours only in the evening, after passing through Korytnia,² and was off again before daybreak³ on his way to join Gérard's division. Hearing a loud cannonade,⁴ he advanced to investigate, and having realized that the road was cut, he at once gave Marshal Ney a detailed account of the state of affairs, and quickened his own pace. A short way on, he came upon several detachments in some disorder, belonging to the Viceroy's corps. This decided him to advance against the cannon he had heard, instead of waiting. He thought that his co-operation would have the double advantage of extricating the Viceroy and opening a passage for Ney. His determination, and the bold front of General Gérard's troops, deceived the Russians, who were in any case uneasy in consequence of the diversion brought about by the Guard's attack that the Emperor had ordered. The enemy evacuated the road, and the 1st Army Corps rallied the whole army. This is how Marshal Davout explained the affair, and how he subsequently described it to me.

The following details represent the facts of the case as recounted by the Emperor and the Prince of Neuchâtel at the

¹ General Etienne-Maurice Gérard (subsequently Marshal), on September 23rd took over the command of the Gudin division (3rd Division, 1st Corps).

² November 16th.

³ November 17th.

⁴ Battle of Krasnoë.

time. The 1st Corps, aware of the dangers threatening the Viceroy, who was ahead of it, quickened its pace, keeping Marshal Ney informed of its movements, but not bothering about whether he was able to follow them. The harder the Russians pressed and attacked, the more it accelerated its pace, thus carrying out the orders which Marshal Davout had received, and which he had passed on to Marshal Ney, assuming that the latter, being in command of the rear-guard and fully informed as to what was happening, would also carry them out and hasten his pace. No one expected a persistent attack, or was made anxious about the 3rd Corps by the wild shouts of the Cossacks. Marshal Davout argued that any other policy would have vainly jeopardized the fragments of regiments that still remained with him, and would not have helped Marshal Ney, as the 3rd Corps could have been destroyed or taken prisoner before he had met Marshal Ney or been overtaken by him. This version of the affair was given out during the day.

It is impossible to describe the unbridled fury that was manifested against the Prince of Eckmühl [Davout]. The Duke of Elchingen [Ney] was the hero of the campaign, and the General about whose precarious situation everyone felt uneasy. Interest in his circumstances was general, and so great that no limits were imposed in speaking of the Prince of Eckmühl, and scarcely any even when he came into the presence of the Emperor, or when he was met personally. The Emperor and the General Staff were the more ready to saddle him with responsibility for the tragic event they feared might come to pass, because thereby they justified themselves for leaving so large an interval between the departure of the two columns, the Duke of Elchingen not having been able to leave Smolensk till the 17th. This delay, as I have already pointed out, was due partly to the necessity of baking sufficient bread to feed the corps for several days. The Duke of Elchingen took the view that it was of vital importance to provision his troops in order to prevent them from deserting, and therefore that it was not his duty to hurry. Of the last orders sent to him, one never reached him, and the other only arrived on the

evening of the 16th, when it was too late for him to anticipate the time fixed for his departure. The state of our communications accounted for these delays.

The interval left between the departure of the various corps (according to its first order the 3rd Corps was to leave Smolensk on the 17th¹), proves the extent to which the Emperor deluded himself in regard to the army's situation and the dangers that threatened it. Did he flatter himself that he would once more subdue the fate to his purposes, and bring the cold within the compass of his will as he had so often brought victory? Things had come to such a pitch that resignation was demanded by the force of circumstances. To have waited at Krasnoë would have jeopardized the army without serving any useful purpose; to return there, as was proposed by certain persons, when the 1st Corps was known to have arrived and the 3rd to have been abandoned to itself, was quite pointless. Nevertheless, such a project was the expressed wish of many, although, to those who considered it, it must have seemed absurd, as Marshal Ney's fate was in fact already decided one way or the other when, so far away from him, extravagant plans for his rescue were being considered. The General Staff said openly that when he learnt what had happened, the Emperor ordered the Prince of Eckmühl to go back and march at the head of the corps which he should have supported. Such an order, however, was given on the impulse of the moment, and with the certainty that it could not be carried out when actually delivered to the Prince. He, in any case, from the beginning, had very sensibly aimed at closing up with the corps in front of him, his own being reduced practically to nothing. It is a thousand pities that everyone was not instructed to do likewise after leaving Smolensk. The real trouble was that we had tried to keep too much artillery. Being badly mounted, the artillery held everything back, causing gaps between one corps and another, and generally delaying our progress. The sensible thing

¹ *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19337: Napoleon to Berthier, Smolensk, November 14, 1812. Ney was given orders to blow up Smolensk on the 16th or 17th.

would have been carefully to distribute a certain amount of artillery to each corps before leaving Smolensk, to see that it was properly mounted, even to arrange for reserve horses, and to sacrifice all that remained. In this way the artillery would have been prevented from delaying the infantry; the Emperor would have been able to execute any movement he desired; the whole army would have moved practically as a single unit; there would have been fewer stragglers, and it would certainly have been possible to beat off all attacks on the part of the Russians, who only attacked when they were at least six times stronger than the poor starving wretches on whom they fell.

The Emperor hoped (at least, so he said) that the Duke of Elchingen would have known or have found out that the pace of the retreat had been accelerated, and would accordingly have accelerated his own pace, even though the orders to this effect had not reached him. He added that the Duke of Elchingen was known to be not far from the Prince of Eckmühl's hindmost troops. But what was the point of such speculation? The Russian Army was between him and us; and we were too far away to be able to help him, or for him to be able to make a sudden break through to us. The Emperor fixed all his hopes on Marshal Ney's rare courage and presence of mind. The army did likewise. Despite this legitimate confidence in his hero, the Emperor never ceased to regret his loss, which he regarded as almost inevitable. "He will attempt the impossible," he said, "and lose his life in some desperate attack. I'd give the 300 millions in gold I've got in the Tuileries vaults to save him. If he is not killed, he'll escape with a few brave men. But the odds are heavy against him."

The Prince of Neuchâtel repeated openly, as did the Emperor, that in spite of the most specific orders, the Prince of Eckmühl had abandoned the Duke of Elchingen. He even showed the minutes of the two orders that had been given. In fact, these orders had no bearing on the general situation, nor on the circumstances that had made it necessary for everyone to behave as they had.

On the 19th, headquarters was established at Orcha,¹ where the Emperor anxiously awaited news of the safe arrival of his vanguard. The bridge was well occupied by our troops. We had relied on the local shops, but these only sufficed the needs of the Guard and headquarters. The countryside, however, provided further substantial resources, which, though certainly a boon to the army, were also a curse, as large numbers of men who had hitherto kept their ranks left them when they found themselves amidst abundance, and went after food supplies. Of these, only very few returned. A solitary existence which held out to the men hope of getting plenty to eat, of being free, of having a covered lodging instead of a bivouac nearly always without rations, of obtaining rest and warmth during the night instead of duties made painful by the cold—all this was most attractive in their eyes. Cossacks and armed peasants captured many of these stragglers daily, as most of them had carelessly thrown away their arms in order to be able to get along more easily, and also in order not to be forced back in the ranks, where their lack of arms made them useless.

The pleasure of seeing a countryside inhabited and not stripped of all its resources hardly served to distract attention from the Duke of Elchingen, who was at this time an object of general interest. The Prince of Neuchâtel showed everyone the orders given to the Prince of Eckmühl by the General Staff, rather as if he wanted to clear himself in advance of any responsibility for whatever happened to Marshal Ney. He showed them to me. The outburst of fury against Marshal Davout was the more general in that the Emperor publicly charged him with being responsible for all the dangers that might overtake the 3rd Army Corps. The fact is, of course, that the pace should have been accelerated all along the line, and that Marshal Ney should have left Smolensk on the 16th; but the Emperor never could make up his mind when it was a question of ordering a retreat. Knowing nothing at

¹ The Emperor left Doubrowna at eight o'clock in the morning, and arrived at one o'clock at Orcha, where he lodged in a Jesuit convent.

Smolensk about where the enemy was, not being made uneasy by flank attacks, it was reasonable enough on his part to assume that the enemy was behind him, and he doubtless thought that it would be possible to hold back the Russians by slowing down the pace of his own rear-guard. Looking back in judgment, it is easy enough to condemn this or that policy which seemed best at the time. In this particular case, when the event issued from a chain of events at once grave and difficult, and each more vexatious than the last, no one has the right to put forward dogmatic opinions about the conduct of so distinguished a soldier unless he both understood and participated in the Commander-in-Chief's policy, and in the happenings in which the former was involved. It cannot be denied that once, near Krasnoë, Marshal Davout jeopardized his already weakened forces by waiting for Marshal Ney, and thus without improving the situation of the latter, since the 1st Corps was now little more than a shadow of itself. No one took sufficiently into account the delays and annoyances due to the frost, which had already decimated us, and had also upset all our plans.

It should be pointed out that there was, to his everlasting glory, only one opinion about Marshal Ney in the army. To overtake us on the Krasnoë road was regarded as an impossible task; but if anyone could make the impossible possible, then Ney was the man to do it. Every map was in use; everyone pored over them, tracing the route that he would follow if courage could open a way for him. "Under such a leader, the infantry are capable of anything when they've got rid of their artillery," it was generally said; "he will return through Kiev rather than surrender." From the troopers to the Emperor, nobody doubted that if he had not been killed, he would have rallied his men. The only lingering doubt was that, thinking we were waiting for him and that we would second his efforts the moment we heard his guns, he might persist in trying to cut a way through the enemy, and in doing so find a glorious death. What finer tribute could be paid to a soldier than this general opinion that he would successfully carry out what most men would hardly dare even to attempt?

The Emperor arrived at Orcha on the 19th, and spent part of the day on the bridge.¹ He paid a visit to the outlying parts of the town, as though he still had in mind the possibility of keeping it. Although there was no news of the Duke of Elchingen, we continued to hope. Every delay made our plight worse, and so the retreat continued. The Viceroy was put in charge of the rear-guard; and on the 20th, in the afternoon, headquarters was transferred to the manor-house of Baranoui,² a short way away from Orcha and a quarter of a league off the road. Here the Emperor learnt from a Polish civilian of the Moldavian Army's march on Minsk.³ His informant, however, was unable to tell him exactly when it had started and what progress it had so far made. All he knew was hearsay, picked up from someone else.

"Tchitchagoff intends, no doubt, to join Tormasov," the Emperor said to me, "and they'll send an army to the Beresina, or rather to join Kutusoff in this hilly country. As I've always thought, Kutusoff is leaving us alone now in order to get ahead, and will attack when these reinforcements have caught up with him. We must hurry. Time has been lost since we left Smolensk, although if my orders have been carried out I'll also have my forces mustered on the Beresina. We must get there as fast as possible, because great things may happen there."

The Emperor was greatly preoccupied, and, for the first time, struck me as uneasy about the future. Reluctantly separating himself from news of Marshal Elchingen, he only left Orcha late in the afternoon. The town had yielded us

¹ Across the Dnieper, and just before arriving at Orcha.

² The Emperor left Orcha on the 20th, and, in the afternoon, stayed in this manor-house situated on the right of the road, four leagues from Orcha.

³ Tchitchagoff, leaving Sacken in front of Schwarzenberg, had marched through Slonim on to Minsk, which was defended by General Bronikowski with a force of only four thousand men. Minsk was occupied by the Russians on November 16th. Before seeing this civilian, Napoleon had at Orcha received Captain Konopka, who had been sent from Vilna by the Duke of Bassano, and who, thanks to a disguise, had been able to travel through the country. (*Dennée, Itinéraire*, p. 141.)

some supplies, notably fodder. But what were these supplies compared with the great mass to be fed? The countryside, better even than the one round Smolensk, was far less wasted, and the inhabitants were generally in their houses.

The Viceroy, who had remained in Orcha, announced soon after the Emperor's departure that Marshal Ney had crossed the Dnieper near Variski¹ on the night of the 18th-19th, over barely formed ice, and that he had with him, besides his own army corps, four or five thousand stragglers and refugees from Moscow who had sought shelter in his ranks. The Viceroy was given orders to advance in order to make it easier for Marshal Ney to rejoin the main body of the army, and had, in fact, already done so by advancing one of his divisions.²

Never has a victory in the field caused such a sensation. The joy was general; people were drunk with delight; everyone was on the move, coming and going to tell of this return; it was impossible to resist repeating to whomever one met. Such a national occasion had to be announced even to the grooms. Officers, soldiers, everyone was convinced now that we could snap our fingers at ill-fortune, that Frenchmen were invincible!

M. de Briquerville, a staff officer, one of those sent to tell the Marshal to quicken his pace, who had been wounded in the thigh when fighting with the 3rd Corps, arrived in the evening and gave full details.³ The following were given later by the Marshal.

¹ The crossing took place at the village of Syrokorenien. Afterwards, Ney made for Gusinoje on his way to Orcha.

² Eugène marched with a division ahead of Ney, and met him a league from Orcha on November 21st at 4 a.m. (General Pelleport, *Souvenirs militaires et intimes*, II, 52.)

³ He arrived at Orcha on the 20th (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 191). Armand-François-Bon-Claude de Briquerville, born on January 23, 1785, at Bretteville (Manche), Fontainebleau, student on 3 Thermidor, year XII, second lieutenant in the 28th Dragoons on September 21, 1805, captain on June 8, 1809, major on October 3, 1812, lieutenant-colonel on June 20, 1813, colonel on April 2, 1815, put on the retired list in December 1815, died on March 19, 1844. In 1812 he was aide-de-camp to General Lebrun. His thigh was pierced by a cannon ball at Krasnoë.

In the afternoon of the 18th a thick mist prevented him from seeing an inch in front of him, and his advance-guard ran headlong into Russian batteries. There were three enemy corps with formidable artillery on both sides of the Krasnoë road and on the road itself. When he heard firing, he closed up with his advance-guard, which he overtook at five o'clock. Believing that we were waiting for him, and that the cannonade would be the signal for a general attack on our part, he renewed his own attack several times in the hope of breaking a way through the enemy. His troops fought with remarkable bravery despite a murderous fire from all quarters. After breaking through two ranks, our men seemed doomed to die under the cannon-fire of a third, without being able to overcome all the obstacles that the Russians had prepared and now opposed to their valour. Realizing that to break through was hopeless, he resumed his original position, continuing to fight until ten o'clock in order to force the enemy to keep their forces concentrated at that point. Firing then ceased, and General Miloradovich sent a second messenger (this time a major) with a flag of truce¹ to the Marshal to propose that he should surrender. The Marshal, however, who had already made up his mind to do no such thing, and had sent out reconnaissances to explore the district as soon as he had become convinced that we were no longer near enough to help him, was confirmed in his intentions by hearing from this Russian officer that the whole French army had left Krasnoë, and was already a long way off.² He kept the major with him, and continued in absolute silence the movement he had already begun to get across the Dnieper, having reconnoitred there the evening before. Although in several places at the edges the ice was scarcely formed, few lives were lost. It was even possible to save the bulk of the horses.

When day broke, the Russians found only our spiked guns,

¹ The first messenger had been sent on the same day, just when the fighting had begun.

² See Pelleport, *Souvenirs*, II, 49: "This messenger told the Marshal that the army corps which preceded the third had been destroyed, as also the Imperial Guard."

and understood what one brave man can do with Frenchmen behind him. The Marshal, having reached the other bank of the river, sent out small detachments to go to Orcha and inform the Emperor. Only one got through.¹ Through him the Viceroy received the first news. Platow, coming from Smolensk by the right bank, and flooding the country with his mass of Cossacks, was at once informed of the Marshal's passage. He then assembled all his units together, surrounded him, harrying him continually on his march, and forced him to be constantly forming squares to repulse these raids, to shield stragglers, refugees, and such wounded as could be transported. The efforts of all the Don Cossacks were unavailing; not for a moment were the 6000 heroes of Marshal Ney stemmed or halted. The boldness of his retirement, contrasted with the so-called prudence of his colleague, was all the more widely discussed because the Prince of Eckmühl was not generally liked. Great and small alike seized the opportunity of casting their stones at him, without ascertaining whether the orders which he received, the advice he gave to Ney, or his circumstances at the moment, did not justify him. The Marshal's return entirely restored the Emperor's confidence in his star, that faith which had so often been too happy for his own, and our, good.

On the 21st headquarters were at Kamienska, seven leagues from Baranoui. The Emperor, on the way, received fresh tidings of the march of the Moldavian Army.² Count Daru, who was some distance behind the Emperor, trying to help the wounded who covered the road and filled any houses left intact, had met a Polish officer, who asked him to give this information to the Emperor, his own horse being incapable

¹ "The Marshal had sent off a Polish officer in the morning, who brought the news to Orcha. The Emperor had left there the night before. The Viceroy and Davout were still occupying the town." (Fczensac, *Journal*, 117.)

² On the 20th, Tchitchagoff started out for Borissow. His advance-guard, commanded by General Lambert, made contact on the 21st at the Borissow bridge-head with the Dombrowski division, which had been sent to relieve Bronikowski, but had not reached Minsk in time.

of going farther, until he could bring it himself. The Emperor asked question after question of Count Daru, and later of the officer. The latter, however, knew only that Tchitchagoff was marching on with the Moldavian Army to Borisow. In the evening the Emperor told us these particulars, which had given him serious food for thought.

"Shall we arrive in time?" he said to me. "Will the Duke of Belluno have resumed the offensive in time to drive away Wittgenstein?¹ If the ways across the Beresina were closed to us, something might happen to force us to make a way with the cavalry of the Guard. How far could we get this cavalry in five or six days, with the horses in their present condition, unless we successively left behind the worse? With my Guard and as many brave men as we can assemble, it would still be possible to break through. I am most anxious to know what Schwarzenberg and my troops from the Dwina have done. Maret has never lacked means of sending information: he ought to have kept them informed of the Admiral's movements."

The Emperor then spoke to me about his journey to France as of something already settled, and told me that I should accompany him, that he had no need of another captain of the Guard.²

It was now behind the Beresina that the Emperor thought he would be able to take up his position, supplies in Minsk providing the wherewithal to rally and feed the army.

"The Reggio and Belluno corps," he said to me, "will be covering the retreat within a few days; the men from Moscow will be stationed in the second line, and the stragglers will be rallied."

¹ Victor with the 2nd Army Corps (Oudinot) and the 9th (Victor) had attacked Wittgenstein on the 14th at Smoliany, and had withdrawn on the 15th to Czereja. On the 21st, Oudinot had marched on to Bobr, Victor remaining still at Czereja.

² In the course of various conversations that had taken place on this journey, I had asked him to take one of the Marshals with him, pointing out that responsibility for such a journey might more fittingly be confided to them. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

There was still no news from France. It was this privation that the Emperor felt most. He scarcely dared even to hope that the Polish officers and men sent to Wilna had been able to get through, and the Duke of Bassano thus enabled to send news and reassurances to France. The Emperor realized all the possible disagreeable consequences of such a silence, and this realization intensified the unpleasant thoughts to which the fresh news gave rise. Disorder and disorganization had made such progress that I was far from sharing his hopes of being able, provided always that nothing happened to upset the measures that had to be taken, to rally the army in front of Wilna. The Emperor, apart from his uneasiness at the appearance of Tchitchagoff, saw his army in battle array as soon as he had joined up with his troops from the Dwina.

On the 22nd, he stopped at Tolotchine in a convent of some kind.¹ There he heard of the evacuation of Minsk, and of how General Lambert, commanding Admiral Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, had occupied the town on the 16th. The Emperor, to whom this news meant the loss of the supplies, of all the resources he had counted on since he had left Smolensk to rally and reorganize the army, was for a moment dismayed. It meant not only that he lost the resources he had counted on, but also that he must face the disturbing certainty that the Moldavian Army might already be massed in our rear instead of, as he had all along hoped, having as its objective to join forces with Kutusoff and the main Russian Army on our flank.

The Emperor's character, like steel by fire, was tempered anew by these reverses of circumstances, and this vista of danger; and he immediately made up his mind to quicken the retreat, if possible to reach the Beresina before Kutusoff arrived there, and to fight and vanquish whatever stood in his way. Instinctively adopting at the same time the line of reasoning which consoled him by putting his situation in the best light, he decided that Schwarzenberg and Reynier, hearing of what had happened, would have started to move and

¹ Tolotchine is seven leagues from Kamienska.

altered the whole state of affairs.¹ In any case, the concentration at Borissov of all the forces he had in that district that would certainly be brought about by the course of events would, he thought, be a great asset from the point of view of the safety of the army's retreat, which he realized now could not be stopped before Wilna. He was certain to find the Borissov bridge well guarded. That was the main thing. Its defence had been arranged for some time; troops were available for the purpose, and, judging by what he was gracious enough to say to myself and the Prince of Neuchâtel, he had no qualms about the matter.

In the evening, when the Emperor had lain down, and had, as so often happened, kept Count Daru and Duroc to talk with him, he began to doze, and these gentlemen, waiting to withdraw until he was well asleep, began chatting together. After a quarter of an hour the Emperor woke up and asked what they were saying.

"We were wishing that we had a balloon," M. Daru replied.

"What for?"

"To carry off your Majesty."

"Heaven knows things are difficult enough. You're afraid, then, of being taken prisoners of war?"

"No, not prisoners of war, because they won't let your Majesty off as lightly as that."

"In fact, the situation is very grave, and grows more complicated. None the less, if the leaders give a good example, I am still stronger than the enemy. I have more resources than I need to break a way through the Russian forces, if they are the only obstacle."

It was on the next day² that the Secretariat of State burnt their papers³ in accordance with instructions given by M. Daru

¹ Schwarzenberg and Reynier were fighting at this time against Sacken, who had defeated the latter at Wolkoysk on November 15th, when he was obliged to retreat the next day to Brest-Litovsk, after an unsuccessful attempt to separate the two army corps.

² November 23rd.

³ What was called the Secretary of State's correspondence was very considerable; the details of army administration during the campaign alone amounted to a mass of papers. In addition, there

when we had left Ghjat, where the destruction of equipment began.

The Emperor sent for me in the early hours of the morning, and told me of the bad news he had received:

"This is beginning to be very serious," he said.

He asked me whether it was freezing enough for the rivers and lakes to be frozen hard, and whether the artillery could pass over the ice.

"I am inclined to think not, at least as far as the rivers are concerned," I replied.

"You don't know what you're talking about. Didn't Ney cross the Dnieper over the ice, after leaving his cannon behind, when it wasn't so cold as to-day? It's going to freeze, and we shall be able to cross the Beresina marshes. Otherwise, we should have to break through the enemy, and then make a big detour. How many days of forced marches will it take to reach Villeika¹ or Gloubokoje?² The position is likely to turn critical if Kutusoff has manoeuvred skilfully; and if Wittgenstein is ready to support him, or has joined forces with the

were all the reports and projected decrees of the various French ministries, what were called portfolios, the bringing of which each week was the work of a special reporter. There were twenty-seven portfolios that had not been sent off again, and that were collected together. (*Caulaincourt's note*.) Denniée (*Itinéraire*, 145) and Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 259) give this burning as having taken place at Orcha on the 20th in the daytime, but Ségur gives the following fantastic description of it: "There, unfortunately, were destroyed all the papers that he (Napoleon) had collected to write the story of his life, for such had been his intention when he set out on this disastrous war." Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 407) points out in regard to this assertion: "It is ridiculous to suppose that the Emperor, starting on a war, would take with him all his papers to write the story of his life, as though he expected to enjoy in Russia the most complete repose." Caulaincourt's text clears up the question as to the character of the burnt papers. See also *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19346, orders of the day dated from Tolotchine, November 22, 1812: "Baggage will be reduced."

¹ On the Villia.

² On the road from Wilna to Witepsk. The Emperor's Imperial quarters had been there from July 18th to 22nd.

Admiral. This damned sailor¹ brings me nothing but bad luck. As for Kutusoff—he knows nothing about war. He is brave enough in a fight when he's on the winning side, but he knows nothing about strategy."

The Emperor told me what Daru and Duroc had said to him.

"Their balloon is not to be laughed at," he said jokingly. "On this occasion, only brave men will have a chance of saving their skin. If we can get across the Beresina, I shall be able to control events, because the two fresh corps that I shall find there, with my Guard, will be adequate to defeat the Russians. If we cannot cross, we shall try what our pistols can do. Consult with Duroc about what we can take with us if we have to try to break through across open fields without transport. We must be ready to advance to destroy everything so as to leave no trophies for the enemy. I would rather eat with my fingers for the rest of the campaign than leave a single fork to the Russians. Discuss with Duroc the business he has on hand, but tell nobody else. I have spoken only to him and to you. We should also make sure that my arms and yours are in good condition, because we shall have to fight."

The Emperor again went into great detail about his position and about the project of which he had spoken. I had a conversation later with Duroc, who told me what the Emperor had said to him and Daru. We agreed that henceforth everyone who fed in the Emperor's mess should be responsible for his own cup, plate and cutlery if he wanted to keep them. The pretext we gave was that the canteen mules were giving out.

Although the cold was still severe enough, the weather was overcast, and a thaw, or at least snow, threatened. The sick and wounded froze during the night near the bivouacs. Carelessness, and the difficulty of finding fodder and, above all, water for the horses, caused many of them to perish.² M. Giroud, my aide-de-camp, who had been in my carriage since

¹ Tchitchagoff was an Admiral of the Russian Fleet.

² The Emperor's carriages, still numerous and in tolerable condition, proved to me that it was not of cold that these animals died, but through lack of proper care, lack of food; and, above all,

he was wounded at Krasnoë, died during the night. He had been unconscious for two days.

From Tolotchine to Bobr, where we arrived on the 23rd,¹ the road was even more thickly covered with dead horses than on preceding marches. There were also a certain number of human corpses; and at all the bivouacs a large number of men died from asphyxiation due to their having gone too near to the fire, being already frost-bitten and nearly frozen. The others groaned, but could not drag themselves away, either because they were too weak or because their hands and feet were frozen. This horrible sight made a profound impression on everyone. It was impossible to convince a poor wretch numbed with cold that fire was fatal to him, that the only

lack of drink. To water them, it was necessary as a rule to go a fair distance, and to break the ice. Then there had to be a vessel of some sort to draw the water, since the banks were not everywhere fordable. Arriving at night, where could we find a river or a well? A surface of water was indistinguishable from a surface of soil, the frost having given the same colour to everything. Ice, which had been broken with difficulty in the evening, would be frozen hard again the next morning. Thus fresh efforts had to be made. Moreover, to break it at all, an axe or an iron rod was necessary; and there was a shortage of every sort of instrument. When he arrived in the evening, a driver, half-dead with cold, would be afraid of getting lost. He would try to find some means of lighting a fire and sheltering himself, and to get hold of something to eat. When he was not too much overcome, or if the weather was not too bad, he would try to do what he could for the horses. More often than not, however, when the weather was bad, he just left them where they were, and set out next morning without the wretched animals having been unharnessed. These precise particulars explain the enormous losses we suffered. The preservation of the Emperor's horses convinced me that these losses were due to the causes I have just indicated, as the Emperor's horses were bivouacked just like the others, and were dependent, like the army horses, on whatever the postillions and grooms could get hold of when we encamped in the evening; that is, on a certain amount of bad fodder which was to be found some distance away on the sides of the road, and that could only be got at in the night and at the risk of one's life. Except at Mojaïsk, Ghjat, Smolensk and Orcha, we found no supplies anywhere. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

¹ The Emperor started from Tolotchine at daybreak and arrived at Bobr at four o'clock.

remedy was movement, dry friction, and even better for the hands and feet, friction with snow. The Emperor passed through the crowds of unfortunates without a murmur or a groan being heard. How generous these Frenchmen were in their misfortune! They blamed the elements, and wasted not a word of reproach in the pursuit of glory.

The Emperor expected to overtake the corps of the Duke of Reggio.¹ Recovered from his wounds, he should have resumed his command eight or ten days before, and had had orders to manoeuvre with the object of getting into echelon position on the Moscow road, whilst the Duke of Belluno, with what remained of his army corps joined on to that of Marshal Saint-Cyr, coped with Count Wittgenstein. The Duke of Reggio was in the Smoliany district,² which he should have left at this time to cover our retreat and act as our rear-guard. Our lack of cavalry, and the impossibility of making use of the Guard for reconnoitring purposes on the ice, not to mention the importance of reserving it for an occasion perhaps even more critical, prevented us all the while from getting news of Kutusoff. All we knew was that Platow, who was now feebly attacking our rear-guard, had been reinforced by several battalions. The Emperor counted on the irresolution of Kutusoff, and on the time lost by Miloradovich waiting for the Duke of Elchingen on the Krasnoë road, having given us a start of several days on the main Russian Army, and therefore time to cross the Beresina. After what had happened at Minsk, this crossing was a matter of great concern to him. It was at Losnitza,³ where we were the next day, the 24th, that we learnt of the skirmish at Borissow,⁴ where the

¹ Oudinot, cured of his wound at Polotsk, resumed command of the 2nd Corps early in November.

² On the 23rd, Oudinot arrived at Losnitza, on the road from Bobr to Borissow. Victor, who had at last left Czereja, was due to arrive at Radutice on the 24th.

³ The Emperor set out from Bobr at 8 a.m. on November 24th, and stopped at Losnitza, 32 kilometres from Bobr, at 6 p.m.

⁴ November 21st. Dombrowski was dislodged by Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, commanded by Lambert.

bridge-head occupied by a Polish battalion had been surprised and abandoned to a detachment of Cossacks. The gallant General Dombroski, however, had arrived the night before from the Bobruisk district, and succeeded in getting back to the bridge-head with his division, defending it valiantly for ten hours against three Russian divisions. We learned at the same time that, pressed by superior numbers, he had been forced to recross the bridge in the evening, that he had retreated in perfect order, and had taken up his position on the other bank of the river, at Niemanitz.

This unexpected news, robbing us of our only line of retreat, of the only means, along a long stretch, of crossing this river lined with steep banks and marshes, was the worst the Emperor could have received. The details given with it confirmed the news itself and also certain other particulars implicit in it. There could no longer be any doubt, for instance, about the destination of the Moldavian Army, which the Emperor had long believed to be advancing to reinforce Kutusoff. It was clear, too, that Tchitchagoff had reached Prutjany on October 30th, Slonim on November 3rd,¹ and that the Russians had been in possession of the latter town since October 19th, but that Prince Schwarzenberg's advance-guard had reached Wolkowysk² on November 7th. This last piece of news gave the Emperor grounds for hoping that a useful diversion might take place.

It looked as if we were fated in this cruel campaign to an ordeal of all the most infuriating reverses of which fortune is capable. Whatever was most calculated to upset the Emperor's plans succeeded. After having had to face the loss of all the supplies on which he had counted to meet the army's needs and to provide a means of reorganizing it, he then lost,

¹ A mistake in the dates. Tchitchagoff took fifteen days' rest, and only resumed his journey on October 27th, recapturing Slonim on November 6th. He set out again on the 8th for Minsk, which he took possession of on the 16th.

² Schwarzenberg, in pursuit of Tchitchagoff, arrived at Slonim on November 14th.

just when it represented his only hope, the one available means of crossing the Beresina. Anyone else would have been overwhelmed. The Emperor showed himself greater than the misfortunes which had befallen him. These misfortunes, instead of disheartening him, brought out more than ever his characteristic energy; he showed what sublime courage and a brave army are capable of when they have to contend against the utmost excesses of adversity. Unquestionably, the Emperor dominated events, and showed himself still destined to dictate their course if only he would refrain from misusing his fortune, men and game. Hope, the merest suggestion of success, exalted him more excessively than the worst reverses disheartened him. The indirect news which he received, almost at the same time as the other, of the Prince of Schwarzenberg's¹ successes on the 16th and 17th, revived his hopes. He had been so often loaded with fortune's favours in the most desperate circumstances that he hoped, and was soon quite confident, that the Austrians, kept in touch with what was happening by his Minister,² would catch the inspiration of his genius, that they would take advantage of these successes to come to our aid, and that their manoeuvres would extricate us and even give us a chance of snatching a victory of sorts, which he would know how to make the very most of. With so much ability, with a character so splendidly tempered, with a soul strong enough to dominate all misfortune, he had as little

¹ On the 15th, Sacken attacked Reynier at Wolkowysk, and, on the 16th, ordered a general offensive against the French left flank; but Schwarzenberg, hurrying from Slonim, attacked him in the rear and forced him to retire on to Brest-Litovsk. On the 17th, Sacken was pursued by the combined forces of Schwarzenberg and Reynier.

² The Emperor was not mistaken when he counted on the zeal of his Minister and on the sound instructions he would give to the Austrian forces, since, hearing that Schwarzenberg had been in action with Reynier, who saw that it was a suitable occasion for an attack on the Russians, and that he had defeated Sacken on the 16th and 17th at Wolkowysk and taken three thousand prisoners from him, the Minister urged Schwarzenberg to advance on to Minsk, where he could have been on November 26th. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

inclination as he had need to indulge in self-deception—the refuge of the weak.

His confidence, his boundless optimism, was greater still in the morning when he received the Duke of Reggio's report announcing the defeat of General Tchitchagoff's advance-guard, under the command of General Pahlen, which had ventured as far as Niemanitz, and had lost, the Marshal reported, a lot of prisoners and all the equipment that the Russians had been foolish enough to bring to this side of Borissow.¹ A great deal was made of this success, and we started out for Borissow. Detachments were sent out in all directions to investigate the enemy's position and the possibility of our making a way through, and to make bogus demonstrations.

We could not understand the movements of Kutusoff, who was at this time three to four marches behind us; as we had reason to fear, even strong grounds for supposing, that he would push on as fast as he could to join the Moldavian Army so that they might act in concert, the latter not having joined forces with Wittgenstein. Marshal Oudinot reported the return of General Corbineau, at the head of his light cavalry, who had just carried out a careful reconnaissance of the Beresina's other bank, and who had been forced by recent events to swim across the river. All these particulars, and especially the certainty that Kutusoff was a long way off, made the Emperor feel more at ease. Confident that he was three days ahead of the Russian General, he believed that he understood how events were shaping, and that he was in a position to face up to all dangers and surmount all difficulties.

It is necessary here to revert to events referred to just above

¹ On November 23rd, Tchitchagoff started from Borissow in the direction of Bobr, believing that in front of him there was only Dombrowski's division. His advance-guard, commanded by Count Pahlen, came in contact with Oudinot's army corps near Losnitz, and was thrown into confusion. General Berckheim, with the 4th Cuirassiers, drove Pahlen back to the right bank of the Beresina and retook Borissow, whose bridge he found destroyed.

in order to explain certain circumstances which bear on the disastrous crossing of the Beresina.

General Corbineau,¹ in command of the 6th Cavalry Brigade of the 2nd Corps, acting under the orders of the Duke of Reggio, had been ordered on the 17th to leave the Bavarian division² with which he had been detailed off to take up a position near Gloubokoje, and to rejoin the Moscow army, there having been no news of it for three days. M. Tchernychev,³ who arrived at Plechnitsie on the 20th with a thousand Cossacks, occupied the place for a very short while afterwards, and then withdrew to a half-league away. On the 21st the French brigade proceeded on its way with the intention of crossing the Beresina at Borissow. On arriving at Zembin, the General heard some firing, and was attacked, at the same time, by the Cossacks; his rear-guard, however, impressed them sufficiently for him to be able to press forward. Further on, peasants told him that the Borissow bridge-head had been surprised, that the Polish General had not even defended the town, and that he had abandoned the bridge. This gave the Moldavian Army control of both banks of the Beresina, safeguarded its communications with Wittgenstein by the only bridge in the district, and put the French brigade between it and Tchernychev's Cossacks.

Hearing that General Tchernychev was coming from Lepel,

¹ Jean-Baptiste-Juvenal Corbineau, born at Marchiennes (in the Nord) on August 1, 1776, died at Paris on December 17, 1848, General of Brigade on August 6, 1811. Subsequently, on May 23, 1813, he was appointed General of Division and the Emperor's Aide-de-Camp.

² 20th Division, General Wrede, of the 6th Army Corps (Gouvion-Saint-Cyr). Corbineau's brigade had been transferred from the 2nd Corps to the 6th at the time of the Polotsk affair.

³ "M. Tchernychev had just fulfilled a mission in the neighbourhood of General Wittgenstein that had been entrusted to him by Admiral Tchitchagoff. By chance on the road, he had run into, and been able to rescue, General Wintzingerode and M. Narishkin, who as prisoners of war were being escorted by two gendarmes to France." (*Caulaincourt's note*.) Tchernychev, who had accepted the command of a Cossack regiment, continued to be the Tsar's Aide-de-Camp.

where he had been in communication with Count Wittgenstein, whose advance-guard he probably was, General Corbineau realized how vitally important it was to inform the Duke of Reggio of what had happened. Consequently, he made up his mind to take any risk in attempting to make contact with the Duke rather than to seek his own safety elsewhere, and stopped at the first defile on the Borissow road, keeping on the roads from Minsk and Zembin that were occupied by Cossacks. By good luck the officers and patrols whom he had sent out managed to get hold of a peasant coming from Borissow, who had crossed the Beresina near Wesselowo. Chance favoured General Corbineau's devotion. He decided on his tactics then and there. In the night, he ordered the guide to take him to the place where he had crossed the river,¹ and at midnight on the 21st he crossed at the same spot, where, though he did not know it at the time, he was going six days hence to show the French Army a means of escape; at the same spot where Charles XII had crossed the Beresina, thus extricating what remained of his brave army after his Ukrainian expedition.² The current and the floating ice, difficult to avoid in the darkness, made him lose about seventy men, although his brigade was in compact formation and marching eight abreast.

Although General Corbineau had successfully surmounted one stiff obstacle, Tchitchagoff's army, patrolling the river bank on horseback, faced him with other dangers. Fortune was kinder to him than he would have dared to hope. He avoided Plitsche, that was occupied by the Russians, and moved in the direction of Kostritz, which a Cossack regiment had left just when the French advance-guard came in at the gallop and took possession of its equipment and servants. Continuing his march with the same good luck, he came to a Russian nobleman's residence which had a good bridge over the Natcha. It was the last obstacle he had to overcome before reaching the Smolensk road, where, to his great astonishment, he ran into the 2nd Corps a short distance from Kroupki.

¹ Night of the 21st-22nd. Opposite Studianka.

² June 29, 1708.

If the French Army had taken the same road as he did, what misfortune would have been avoided! How many lives would have been saved! But either the Duke of Reggio attached no particular importance to the details of the reports that General Corbineau made to him, and so did not pass them on to the Emperor, or the Emperor did not consider it expedient to take General Corbineau's route. The fact is that, if we had taken it, we should have gained two marches; that, by making our manoeuvres seem to be directed towards Borissow, we could have avoided the Admiral altogether, and that all our losses might have been saved. General Corbineau felt this so strongly that, not content with simply making a report to the Marshal, he drew his attention once again on the 23rd, in the day-time, to the advantages of the route he had taken. If the Emperor had been aware of all these circumstances, everything suggests that he would have decided in favour of the Borissow manoeuvre for the sake of the advantage of putting the Admiral quite on the wrong scent, though it is possible that Pahlen's defeat and other considerations led him to believe that a straightforward attack would enable him to get control of the Borissow bridge, and thus to cross the river more easily. On the whole, though, the probability is that he knew nothing of General Corbineau's suggestions since he never spoke of them at the time they were made, and even deplored the inconvenience to the artillery and transport section of having to make so large a detour to reach Wesselowo.

The Emperor asked to see General Corbineau on the 23rd, but, as a result of one of those trifling events which often so greatly influence important happenings, M. de Cramayel, the Duke of Reggio's aide-de-camp, left the order in his pocket, and forgot it, so that General Corbineau did not receive it till the 25th.¹ The army had already passed the road that would

¹ Despite the delay of this note, as will be shown, Napoleon received Corbineau as early as the 23rd. The latter saw Oudinot immediately after; then, on the 24th, in the morning, hurried off to make preparations for the crossing at Studianka. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 428) publishes a letter from Berthier to Oudinot, dated November 23rd, giving orders to take possession of the Wesselowo ford as soon as possible, to construct bridges,

have to have been taken by the time he saw the Emperor, to whom he gave an account of all the circumstances of his adventure, pointing out that precious time was being lost by making a useless detour. The Emperor did not pause when this observation was first made, but he reverted to it later, and traced out General Corbineau's route on a map. By then, however, it was too late. He spoke to me, as well as to the Prince of Neuchâtel, about the matter, grumbling that he was never told about things in time. After chatting for a few moments with General Corbineau, he sent him to Wesselowo to prepare whatever was necessary in the way of bridge construction. Without any instruments, without iron, practically speaking without anything at all (he had to pull down houses to get wood), his zeal, coupled with the indefatigable efforts of Colonel Chauveau,¹ triumphed over all difficulties. After having arranged everything, got everything working, he rejoined the Emperor at Staroï-Borissow,² where, when he

redoubts, etc., there. Thus, from this time Napoleon's mind was made up. René-Eleuthère Fontaine, Marquis of Cramayel, born at Moissy-Cramayel (Seine-et-Marne) on July 24, 1789, student at Fontainebleau in 1805, successively Aide-de-Camp to Generals Lagrange, Macdonald and Oudinot, General of Brigade on August 12, 1839, General of Division on June 12, 1848, Senator on June 19, 1854.

¹ Louis-Joseph Chauveau, born at Cretteville (Manche) on September 21, 1778, Sub-Lieutenant in the 8th Horse Artillery Regiment on 13 Floréal, year V, transferred to the Guides Artillery on 9 Frimaire, year VI, admitted to the Artillery of the Consuls Guard as a Second-Lieutenant on 13 Nivôse, year VIII, Under-Captain on 15 Ventôse, year X, Major on May 1, 1806, Colonel of the 5th Horse Artillery Regiment, then in command of the artillery in the 3rd Army Corps of the main army (Oudinot). Killed at Leipzig on October 16, 1813. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

² The Emperor started from Losnitza at nine o'clock in the morning of November 25th, arrived at Borissow at five o'clock in the evening, remained there until eight o'clock, and arrived at ten or eleven o'clock in the evening at Staroï-Borissow farm, belonging to Prince Radziwell, and near to the Beresina. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 193, and Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 154.) He stayed there in the house of the Intendant, Baron Korsach.

had observed Niemanitzza, the banks of the Beresina, the country above and below the town as well as its environs, his Majesty stopped for a few hours to give orders. The Emperor and I even went on foot to the end of the quarter of the bridge which remained intact. Reconnaissances had been sent out in different directions, and demonstrations made at different points. The country round the town was covered with the debris of General Pahlen's army corps. During the day the Emperor received a number of reports from the Duke of Belluno which set his mind at rest about Wittgenstein's movements, these being, at this particular time, of especial concern to him. Nothing gave any indication of an intention on his part to join the Admiral, since he had not attacked the Duke of Belluno, and since he was on the Cholopednice side (of the river).¹

The Emperor had hesitated about where to cross the river. Minsk attracted him more and more because he hoped that the Prince of Schwarzenberg would have made his way there, and that, by means of a double manœuvre, the Russians would not have been given time either to evacuate the town or to destroy their supplies. He therefore summoned the Commissary in charge of the military police to get exact information about the supplies likely to be available, about the nature of the country and about recent events. He also made particular inquiries about the route through Ukoloda;² but the reports of General Corbineau, who arrived in person towards one o'clock, and further particulars from the Duke of Belluno about the extraordinary tactics of Wittgenstein, who confined himself to following his movements, decided the Emperor. He sent back General Corbineau to hurry up the bridge construction with orders to return immediately, and meanwhile made a tour of inspection of the neighbourhood. The Emperor stayed at Staroï-Borissow,³ whence he sent out various orders. General Corbineau joined us again in the

¹ Wittgenstein reached this point on November 24th.

² South of Borissow.

³ North of Borissow.

night, and the artillery, baggage and different army corps were directed to advance on to Wesselowo and Studianka, to whose manor-house the Emperor proceeded with the Guard during the night. General Corbineau acted as guide.

The Emperor set off again two hours before daybreak to join the Duke of Reggio at Wesselowo. He examined the banks of the Beresina, and placed strong artillery on the side we occupied, which dominated the other side across the whole stretch of marshland. This marshland bordered the river, and was from two to three hundred yards wide. He had orders given for the fording of the Beresina to begin. Since the frost had caused the waters to go down, there was no great depth except for a stretch of from three to five yards, across which the horses had to swim so as to be able to climb up the other bank, which was rather steep. On our side, the water only came up to the horses' bellies. Several light horses ridden by our fearless Poles crossed and recrossed without difficulty, and drove away some Cossacks prowling on the other bank, who only fired their rifles when driven beyond the marshland. Later on, there was a small engagement between the advance-guard of Dombrowski's division and a party of sharpshooters, infantry, hussars and Cossacks from Tchalitz's division,¹ who were in the houses of the hamlet of Brillowo, but who retired.

Meanwhile work was being actively carried on to finish fixing the props begun by General Corbineau, and material was collected to make two bridges—one for artillery and one for infantry. Demonstrations continued during the march all along the line. The army was massed in strength at Borissow, and then made in succession for Wesselowo. The Duke of Reggio's corps crossed the bridges before nightfall.² General Dombrowski was wounded in a trifling engagement between his division and Tchalitz's, which had been attacked in the rear and driven out of Brillowo. The 3rd (Ney) and 5th

¹ Tchitchagoff, convinced that we wanted to put him on a wrong scent, during the night recalled this division, which had at first been posted between Borissow and Studianka, on the Lower Beresina.

² At 3 a.m. (Castellanc, *Journal*, I, 194.)

(Poniatowski) Army Corps crossed during the night on their way to support the Duke of Reggio, who, it was then thought, was going to be vigorously attacked by the Admiral.

The Emperor was all day at the bridge. His presence encouraged the sappers and the pontoon-men, who showed real devotion in getting continually into the water to mend a matchwood bridge which broke down under every gun-carriage and half-company of men. The Emperor inspected the marshland from the other bank of the river, and in the afternoon took careful observations of this position, not returning until long after nightfall to Studianka, where he slept on the 26th.

On the 27th, he was back very early at the bridge. The crossing proceeded slowly. So as not to impede the troops and artillery, stragglers and camp-followers were stopped from slipping over the bridge, as they easily would have done in the intervals. Wesselowo was thronged with them. The Guard and the transport wagons crossed on the 27th, in the day-time, and took up a position at Brillowo, on the other bank.

While all this was going on, the Duke of Belluno, who was covering our manoeuvre, was getting into position at midday in front of Wesselowo with the Daendels and Girard¹ divisions; Partouneaux's² division, which he had left in front of Borissow, was to join him during the night. The inaction of the Admiral, who had received orders from Kutusoff to alter the direction of his march, baffled everyone. Nor was it any easier to understand the slow pace of Wittgenstein's pursuit. How had it come about that the Admiral, who had been able to observe our tactics for thirty-six hours past, had not burnt or dismantled the Borissow bridge³ so as to be easy on that score? How was it that he had not made a quick sally with some eighty pieces of cannon, and knocked us to pieces while we were crossing the river? Was he waiting for Wittgenstein? Had Kutusoff joined forces with him? Was he manoeuvring in

¹ 26th Division and 28th Division (9th Corps).

² 12th Division (9th Corps).

³ It has been pointed out above that the bridge was partially destroyed by fire.

our rear? We lost ourselves in conjecture; and, it must be admitted, there was ample ground for doing so.

Before sending the transport wagons into the marshland, I had personally examined all the paths through it in the morning. If the cold, which had diminished during the three preceding days, had not become very much sharper again the day before, we should not have saved a single gun-carriage, as the soil was miry, and trembled beneath one's feet. The last ammunition wagons got bogged, although the path along which they were taken was constantly changed, because they cut or broke through the crust of hard frozen grass which served as a sort of bridge. The wheels had nothing to grip, and sank into the bottomless mud. It required all the perseverance, all the intelligence of which the men in charge of the convoys were capable, to deal with so awkward a situation. It can be said with truth that fortune was never kinder to the Emperor than on these two days: had it not been for the intensity of the cold he could not have saved a single wagon.

The Emperor, who had inspected Brillowo during the day, as well as the road leading thence to Borissow, returned to Wesselowo to see the Duke of Belluno's position. His Majesty had personally supervised the Guard's crossing of the Beresina, and did not return until a late hour to Brillowo—a miserable hamlet where headquarters had been established.¹ It was ascertained from certain marauders that Cossacks, from whom they had escaped, had appeared at Studianka in the afternoon and captured some stragglers. In the Emperor's opinion, these were Wittgenstein's advance-guard.² Was he manoeuvring in concert with the Admiral to attack us on both sides? If so, it was too late for him to be successful; but for General Partouneaux's blundering, which obliged the Duke of

¹ Napoleon crossed the bridge with the Guard on the 27th. Headquarters was established in the evening a little to the south of Brillowo, in a cluster of three huts named Zaniwski, half a league from the Beresina.

² In fact, Wittgenstein, reaching Kostritz on the 26th, had arrived at Staroï-Borissow on the 27th.

Belluno to wait for him, the whole French Army would have crossed the Beresina that night.

Since the condition of the cavalry made it impossible for us to send out strong reconnoitring parties, we were unable to find out with any certainty what were the enemy's movements. Also, although so far our troops had crossed the Beresina without being troubled by a single rifle-shot, and although everything suggested that the crossing would be completed with equal success, the Emperor's attention was fixed on Kamen. It was along this road that the enemy could stop our march, and bar our way with obstacles far more difficult to surmount than the Beresina. The Emperor had just learnt from a peasant, and the report was verified by some officers who had travelled along the Kamen road, that it was constructed on a large number of bridges built over countless small streams which traversed it, that one of these bridges, over an impassable swamp, was more than a quarter of a league long. Thus a light put to a bunch of straw would be sufficient to deprive us of this means of retreat.

On the 28th, in the morning,¹ the Duke of Reggio's advance-guard was attacked so vigorously by Admiral Tchitchagoff that the 3rd and 5th Corps had to come to his support. Several hours passed with honours more or less even. The Duke of Reggio was wounded.² The Emperor, who was present at the engagement, at once replaced him by Marshal Ney. A charge of Cuirassiers, carried out by Doumerc's division,³ decided the affair in our favour. In a felled wood the 7th Regiment, which had taken its place at the head of Berckheim's brigade, fell upon a column of infantry in close formation and dispersed it. The resulting disorder forced the Russians to retreat, leaving behind more than 1500 prisoners, whom I saw. These prisoners were all soldiers from the Moldavian Army.

This check to the Admiral would have made it absolutely

¹ At 7 a.m. Battle of the Beresina.

² From a shot in the side.

³ 3rd Heavy Cavalry Division, forming part of the 3rd Cavalry Corps (Grouchy).

certain that we should succeed in the hazardous operation of crossing the Beresina but for one of those events which no plans made by a human being can take into account, as they are outside all reasonable probabilities. There can be no doubt that the rest of the army would have crossed the river without difficulty, and so been saved, if Partouneaux's division, which had remained at Borissow and which was to join the Duke of Belluno during the night, had not in the darkness mistaken the way where the roads from Studianka and Wesselowo diverge. General Partouneaux¹ and a party of staff officers, thinking that they were on the right road and that the Duke of Belluno was ahead of them, were marching confidently at the head of the division so as to be able to observe in advance the position it would take up, when they found themselves in the midst of the Russians, and were taken prisoner. The enemy, informed in advance of the mistake these officers were making, and leading the division into making, had arranged matters in such a way that they would be allowed to advance. The divisional General was captured; the division itself surrendered, acting under orders of Generals Le Camus and Blanmont.² These particulars were learnt

¹ Partouneaux's division had been left at Borissow on the 27th to hold Tchitchagoff in check. At five o'clock in the evening, realizing that the enemy was, as had been seen, interposed between it and the main body of Oudinot's army corps, which was at Staroi-Borissow, it started out, marching in brigade columns, to fight a way through. General Partouneaux marched with the right-hand, and most exposed, column. As Caulaincourt explains, he went too far to the right, and was surrounded and decimated. At daybreak, Partouneaux was reduced to surrendering with the 4000 to 5000 men who remained with him. At this news, two other brigades threw down their arms. Louis, Count Partouneaux, born at Romilly-sur-Seine (Aube) on September 26, 1770, died at Menton on January 14, 1835, volunteer in 1791, was General of Brigade from April 23, 1799, and appointed General of Division on August 27, 1803. He was made a Count under the Restoration, and appointed Commander of the First Infantry Division of the Royal Guard in 1820.

² Jean Le Camus, Baron Moulignon, born at Aubusson on April 7, 1762, died at Andlau (Bas-Rhin) on July 4, 1846, was General of Brigade from March 1, 1806, and was never promoted

Continued on next page

afterwards, for, at the time, what was a consequence of disastrous imprudence was considered to be due to stupidity and cowardice.¹

The arrival of this division's rear-guard battalion,² which had taken the right road, leaving Staroï-Borissow last, and had caught up with the Duke of Belluno during the night, increased the uneasiness to which the division's non-arrival had already given rise. This battalion had seen and heard nothing, and had found the road free. The Marshal did not doubt but that the division had got lost during the night, and would join him at daybreak. Everyone was constantly expecting to see it appear; and uncertainty ceased only about nine o'clock when Wittgenstein's force, which since the previous evening had been lying facing the Duke of Belluno, was seen to be preparing for an attack. Even then, the rear-guard battalion had arrived without difficulty; no sounds of fighting had been heard; the road, according to a reconnoitring party which had returned, was still free. Thus, no one imagined that a division commanded by experienced Generals could conceivably have surrendered without putting up a fight. Even supposing that General Partouneaux had been attacked by the main body of Wittgenstein's forces, there was nothing to prevent him from

above this rank. Pierre-Marie-Isidore Blanmont, born at Gisors on February 23, 1770, died at Gisors on December 19, 1846, was appointed General of Brigade on August 6, 1811. He was Deputy for Eure in the Hundred Days Parliament. The third brigadier of the division, General Billard, was taken prisoner with his superior officer. The enemy also took prisoner General Delaitre, Commander of the Cavalry Brigade. Compare Patrice Mahon, *Un pèlerinage au bord de la Bérésina*, in the *Carnet de la Sabretache*, V, 1897, 200.

¹ Napoleon was very hard on Partouneaux. The 29th Bulletin said: "Rumours were current that the General of Division was not with his troops, and had been marching by himself." Later, Napoleon pardoned Partouneaux. On July 14, 1813, although their father was still a prisoner, he decided that his three sons should be educated at the State's expense at the Turin lycée, whence, in 1815, he transferred them to the Marseilles lycée.

² This battalion was the 4th Battalion of the 55th Regiment of the Line, and was commanded by Joyeux. (Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 451.)

striking out for the river-bank, this route being still free. Was he still fighting? The engagement about to begin would indicate that he was expected, and would serve him as a useful diversion. It was on this supposition that, far from hastening the progress of the troops across the river, who were already delayed to await the missing division, other reinforcements, including even a detachment from the Guard,¹ were sent to support the Duke of Belluno, who was vigorously attacked about eleven o'clock when we were engaged in fighting Tchitchagoff.

The Emperor only heard of the surrender of Partouneaux's division at one o'clock. The notable success scored against the Admiral made some amends for this misfortune, which was kept as secret as possible at main headquarters, but which was made known at the headquarters of the Duke of Belluno, at the time severely pressed by Wittgenstein's army. Great efforts were made by each to hold this position at least until nightfall; but at last the Marshal was forced to decide on crossing the Beresina in order to save his force from total destruction.

It is impossible to conceive the appearance of the village of Wesselowo and this bank of the Beresina after his withdrawal—everywhere troops, stragglers, refugees, women and children, camp-followers unwilling to abandon their wagons and not permitted to cross the river, the bridges and paths through the fields having been reserved since the evening before for the passage of the Duke of Belluno and the troops detailed to support him. The Emperor hoped up to the last moment that the position would be held till nightfall, in which case everything would have been saved. But when a retreat was decided on, the Wesselowo bank at once became a scene of horror, of indescribable carnage, especially when the Russians' repeated attacks on the last troops to cross the river had driven the crowd of non-combatants to the river's edge. Everyone then rushed to the bridges, which were soon broken, as much

¹ Napoleon made Daendel's division of Victor's corps, which had already crossed the river, cross back again in order to reinforce the rest of the corps on the left bank of the Beresina.

by disorder as by the fugitives' weight.¹ We Frenchmen, unhappy spectators of these scenes of horror and cruelty, were able from our side of the river to estimate roughly the number of victims of Russian barbarism, without any possibility of saving them. Ten thousand men were lost.²

As may well be imagined, there was little inclination to spare General Partouneaux, to whose surrender this misfortune could be largely attributed. The Emperor and the General Staff, the Marshals and officers, the whole army, were more than severe in their judgment on him. "His lack of foresight," everyone agreed, "is unpardonable. The surrender of his division without a fight is shameful." The word "cowardice" was used, and his surrender compared with Marshal Ney's brave determination.

"When d'Assas faced certain death," the Emperor said, "he cried: '*Follow me, men of Auvergne!*' If Generals lack the courage to put up a fight," he went on, "they might at least allow their grenadiers to do so. A drummer could have saved his comrades from dishonour by sounding the charge. A canteen-woman could have saved the division by shouting, 'Everyone for him-elf!' instead of surrendering."

There is no doubt that, apart even from the very good chance we had of getting across the Beresina before the enemy started to attack, this event had an important and unfortunate influence on the whole course of events, and that the division which surrendered would have been of the greatest service, at any rate in the capable hands of the Duke of Belluno, in defending his position.

¹ The bridges were burnt. Eblé had received orders at day-break to set fire to them on the 29th, at seven o'clock in the morning. He did not make up his mind to carry out these orders until nine o'clock.

² This estimate of the number of unarmed stragglers, camp-followers, refugees, women and children is not exaggerated. (*Caulaincourt's note*.) The same figure is given by the Margrave of Baden: "The total number of stragglers taken prisoner can be put, without exaggeration, at 10,000 men." (*Mémoires du margrave de Bade*, A. Chuquet, 1912, 145.) Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, says 200-300 combatants and 10,000-12,000 stragglers.

During these scenes on the bank of the Beresina which we had just left, the 4th and 1st Corps were marching towards Kamen. The certainty that our progress in this direction, which could so easily have been hindered by setting fire to the bridges,¹ would meet with no obstacles was a source of great comfort to the Emperor, as was also the success scored against the Admiral; and both, to some extent, mitigated the day's disasters. Such artillery parks and transport as still remained were also moving towards Kamen. Headquarters remained one more day, the 28th, at Brillowo to attend to the reorganization of the troops, which had been through such a bad time, and generally to repair the army's morale, which had been sensibly affected by all these events.

On the following day, the 29th, the Emperor proceeded to Kamen,² where General Lanskoï, sent there by the Admiral, had appeared about noon. He surrounded a house in which were the Duke of Reggio, General Legrand and other wounded Generals and officers, as well as two officers from the Emperor's personal suite sent ahead to arrange accommodation.³ All the servants were assembled, with a number of soldiers who had gone ahead of the main army; and this

¹ "There were three such bridges to cross between the Beresina and Plechnitsie. By setting fire to them the Russians might easily have stopped the whole army." (*Thiers*, XIV, 639.)

² The Emperor started from Zaniwski on the 29th, at 7 a.m. He stopped at Zembin from ten o'clock till noon, and arrived at Kamen at 5 p.m.

³ Caulaincourt is mistaken. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 409; Castellane, *Journal*, I, 199; Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 163; Lejeune, *Souvenirs*, II, 441, are agreed in placing this scene at Plechnitsie and not at Kamen. The day before, Oudinot had been hit by a bullet and wounded in the side. In the course of the Lanskoï skirmish, a bullet fell into the room where the Marshal was, and a splinter of wood wounded him once more in the thigh. General Juste-Claude-Alexandre-Louis Legrand, born at Plessier-Saint-Just (Oise) on February 23, 1762, died in Paris on January 8, 1815, General of Division from April 20, 1799, in 1812 commanded the 6th Division, 2nd Corps. Later, he was a senator and a peer. Amongst the wounded Generals was also General Pino, of Eugène's Corps.

handful of brave men sufficed to drive away the detachment of Cossacks. Finding that he was unable to capture the house's occupants, Lanskoï bombarded it. Two persons close to the Marshal were wounded. When our advance-guard arrived on the scene, the Russians decided to rest on their laurels for that day.

As the peasant had reported, and various officers confirmed, at a distance of half a league out of Brilowo, and for a distance of about two leagues, the road is an embankment in a marsh, which is so unstable that the greater part of the road is constructed of wooden bridges, two of them nearly a quarter of a league in length. Numerous others cross the little streams, which traverse the marsh here, there and everywhere. How could so easy a means of impeding our progress have been overlooked by the Russians? Six Cossacks with torches would have sufficed to cut us off from this means of retreat.

None of the deductions to be made from this strange lack of foresight on the part of the enemy escaped the Emperor; and he was all the more infuriated by General Partouneaux's manifestation of the same failing, which, as he said, had cost us so dear, when he reflected how easy it would have been, but for this, to make the crossing of the Beresina one of the finest and most glorious military operations ever undertaken. He added that the Russian generals had not yet carried out a single genuinely military operation, not one useful manœuvre, without its having been worked out for them by their Government; and his opinion of Wittgenstein, whom he considered the most tenacious, and, during the Dwina campaign, the most capable of the Russian generals, steadily declined in consequence of his muddled tactics, his indecision and the deliberate slowness of his operations in order not to risk being isolated from the Admiral. He had been saying ever since Polotsk that, given the circumstances in which we were placed, we might consider ourselves lucky in not having more capable adversaries, and so on.

On the way from Brilowo to Kamen, two mules which had fallen behind the others, from the Emperor's transport

wagons, were stolen while their driver was some little way away. No one knew who had got them. I mention this insignificant fact because, in spite of the prevailing misery, it is the only happening of the kind that took place during the campaign. The respect in which the Emperor was held, the devotion to his person, was such that nobody belonging to his suite, even one of his servants, was ever insulted. Not one murmur against the Emperor was heard in the whole course of this disastrous retreat. Soldiers were dying by the roadside, but I never heard a single grumble; and my testimony in this respect is worth something, because after Wercia I always marched on foot, sometimes with the Emperor, sometimes in front of him, sometimes behind him, but always amongst groups of men in uniform, without my riding-coat and wearing my uniform hat. Unquestionably, any discontent amongst the men would have manifested itself in the presence of a general in uniform. The individual behaviour of these unfortunate soldiers, who, lacking all the necessities of life, froze to death by the road-side, often astonished me, I admit; and I was not alone in admiring it.

From Kamen we proceeded to Plechnitsie, where the General Staff slept on the 30th. At Beresina we had lost a large number of our stragglers and camp-followers, who had been in the habit of looting everything, thus depriving the brave fellows who remained in the ranks of the supplies which they so badly needed; the gain, however, was negligible, as bands of irregulars were formed in full view of everyone with the object of recruiting fresh stragglers. All that remained of the 1st Corps was its standard and a few commissioned and non-commissioned officers surrounding their Marshal. The 4th was more than weakened, and the 3rd, which had fought so valiantly against the Moldavian Army, had been reduced by more than half its strength after that affair. The Poles were in no better case. Our cavalry, apart from the Guard, no longer existed except in the form of parties of stragglers, which, although the Cossacks and peasants attacked them savagely, over-ran the villages on our flanks. Hunger proved an irresistible force; and the need to live, to

find shelter against the cold, made men indifferent to every sort of danger.

The evil spread also to the Duke of Reggio's corps, now joined on to Marshal Ney's, and even to the Duke of Belluno's divisions, which constituted the rear-guard. Finding only a countryside devastated by stragglers and by the troops which had preceded them, no supplies, no distribution of rations, the disorganization which in these unhappy circumstances resulted from a bad example and the most urgent need attacked also those troops on which the Emperor had counted to sustain his retreat and reorganize the army from Moscow.

Cavalry officers, who had been constituted into a company under the command of Generals,¹ in a few days also scattered, so wretched were they, and so tortured by hunger. Those who had a horse to feed were forced, if they did not want to lose it, to keep some distance away, as there were no supplies at all along the road. The Guard also lost more stragglers after Kamen; but this body of men, who no doubt complained a little, but always under their breath, and who got whatever supplies were going, still made an excellent impression by virtue of their general appearance, their vigour and their martial air. These veterans cheered up as soon as they caught a glimpse of the Emperor, and the battalion each day on guard duty kept up an astonishing standard of smartness.

Thinking of this astonishing smartness of the Guard reminds me of the contrast between our men from Moscow and the troops from the Dwina² at the time when we joined forces with them. Our men, emaciated, bloodless, grimy as chimney-sweeps, enfeebled, were like spectres, although vigorous enough on the march and full of dash under fire. The others, less exhausted, better fed, less smoked by bivouac fires, seemed to us like men belonging to another race. They were alive, we were shadows. The contrast in the horses was

¹ Napoleon had just constituted what was called the *escadron sacré*, less to provide himself with a personal bodyguard than to provide a centre for rallying the officers who had no longer any men under them.

² Victor and Oudinot.

even more striking. The artillery of these two corps was superb. The Generals and officers were well mounted, had all their equipment, and had been enjoying all the good things that can be got on campaign. At Wesselowo, the officers of the Emperor's General Staff—for instance, Duroc and myself—made more than one visit to the Duke of Reggio's kitchen, so great had been the privations to which all ranks in the army had been subjected. In the engagement against the Moldavian Army, our worn-out fellows from Moscow were not behind their comrades as far as courage was concerned. In fact, as was said every day, our soldiers had more courage than strength.

When we reached Kamen, the Emperor spoke again with me about his journey to France. He did not anticipate any further obstacles to prevent the army from reaching Wilna, where he considered it would be safe, and sure of a chance to recuperate. He hoped to come upon his despatches from Paris in under forty-eight hours, and to get news of the troops which ought to be coming ahead of us from Wilna. We were almost in communication with the Bavarians. The arrival of the Polish Cossacks, whom he took to be only a few marches away, was his chief concern. He continued to believe in the Prince of Schwarzenberg's advance, and hoped that it would lead to a useful diversion for our retreat, and give us a chance to take up a position in cantonments.¹ He expected frequent attacks from Cossacks, but regarded them as unimportant, since our latest stragglers had organized themselves under leaders into powerful squads to repel them and to awe the peasants. It was common enough to see one of these small detachments of fifteen or twenty men chasing 150 or 200 Cossacks in front of them: the Emperor, then considered himself to be out of reach of Wittgenstein and Kurusoff; and and the Admiral could only follow behind us along the road, at least unless he made a detour which would cause him to lose two marches. The Emperor learned in the evening that the Admiral had in fact followed the same route as we had; and, during the night, he received the report of a sharp engagement

¹ Schwarzenberg remained at Slonim until December 14th.

at Tchovitzi with our 9th Corps, which constituted the rear-guard.

On December 1st, headquarters were at Staïki. We had not hitherto had such a bad lodging.¹ Staïki was nicknamed "Miserowo." The Emperor and the officers of the General Staff had each a little niche of seven or eight feet square. All the rest of the staff were packed together in another room. It froze so hard that everyone sought shelter in this cubby-hole. When we lay down, it had to be on our sides so as to save space. We were packed so tightly together that a pin could not have dropped between us.

Moving about in the darkness, someone trod on the foot of M. de Bausset, who had been following us in a carriage ever since Moscow, suffering horribly from gout. The wretched cripple, suddenly awakened by the sharp pain that this clumsiness caused him, began to shout: "Monstrous! I'm being murdered!" Those who were awake shouted with laughter, which awoke the sleepers; and everyone—serious and light-hearted alike, and the unfortunate sick man himself—paid tribute to this momentary folly with roars of laughter. I describe this scene to show how a man is capable of accustoming himself to the most wretched circumstances, and how, just as the most trivial thing will distract him, so he can witness the greatest misfortunes almost unmoved.

After crossing the Beresina, our faces were less careworn. For the first time, Poland seemed delightful to everyone. Wilna had become a promised land, a safe port that would shelter us from all storms, and the end of all our troubles. The past seemed a dream, and the prospect of a better plight already made us almost forget the disasters that had come upon us. Weariness, immediate privations, the sight of poor devils dying every moment of cold and exhaustion—all this counted for little with the naturally gay and careless French soldier. Danger makes men egotists. Those who had survived were accustomed to seeing pain and destruction all around them.

¹ Starting out from Piechnitsie at 7 a.m. Napoleon covered eight leagues, and stopped at two o'clock at Staïki, between Nestanowstshi and Llüd.

The strongest characters refused to succumb to misfortune, and tried by their calm to strengthen others who were less strong. Undoubtedly, there was plenty of suffering; we had before us a constant spectacle of fearful misery, of overwhelming distress; but the instinct of self-preservation, the feeling of national pride, and the desire to uphold national honour prevented us from taking full account of this excess of adversity. Our spirits were exalted; and we did not know, or rather did not wish to believe, all that subsequently transpired. Yesterday's dangers, then, like to-day's and to-morrow's, were, imaginatively considered, only like the dangers in a constantly renewed battle. It was war; and, as everyone had his part to play, we were generally gay, careless, even full of raillery, as one is the day before, or the day after, or the very day of, a battle. Unquestionably, despite our sufferings, our headquarters were as good-humoured as the Russian headquarters.

We were approaching Wilna; we were in Poland, and still no despatches had arrived. The Emperor could not understand this delay, as we were very near the Bavarian corps, then stationed at Villeika.¹ This corps, under the command of General Wrede, should have left the Gloubokoje district and advanced on to Dunilowice after the 2nd Corps's retreat, but it had returned after the 19th, and was defending Wilna. This lack of letters from France, and especially the thought of the probable effect there, as well as in Europe, of the absence of all news about the army, was of greater concern to the Emperor than anything else. He prepared a bulletin² giving an account of the course events had taken, and of our latest disasters. He said to me:

"I shall tell everything. It is better that these particulars should be known through me than through private letters. Full details will mitigate the probable effect of the disasters which have to be announced to the nation."

Headquarters were established on the 2nd at Selitche, almost as uncomfortable as the day before. But we found a store of

¹ 6th Corps (formerly Gouvion Saint-Cyr).

² The famous 29th Bulletin.

potatoes. The joy that everyone felt at being able to eat his fill is indescribable. The cold was so intense that bivouacking was no longer supportable. Woe betide those who fell asleep by a camp-fire! Furthermore, disorganization was sensibly gaining ground in the Guard. One constantly found men who had been attacked by frost-bite who had stopped, and, too weak or numb to stand, had fallen on the ground. Ought one to help them to get along, which meant laboriously carrying them? They begged one to let them alone. Ought one to take them to a camp-fire (there were bivouacs with fires all along the road)? Once these poor wretches fell asleep they were dead. If they resisted the craving for sleep, another passer-by would help them along a little further, thus prolonging their agony for a short while, but not saving them; for in this condition the drowsiness engendered by cold is irresistibly strong. Sleep comes inevitably; and to sleep is to die. I tried in vain to save a number of these unfortunates. The only words they uttered were to beg me, for pity's sake, to leave them to sleep a little. To listen to them, one would have thought this sleep was their one salvation. Alas! it was the poor wretch's last wish; but at least he ceased to suffer, without pain or agony. Gratitude, and even a smile, was imprinted on his discoloured lips. What I have related about the effects of extreme cold, and of this kind of death by freezing, is based on what I have seen happen to thousands of individuals. The road was covered with the corpses of these hapless men.

The Emperor stopped for a little while at the crossing of the Villia, in the midst of a bodyguard and on an eminence overlooking a fairly wide reach of the road. I stood apart to watch the debris of our army file past. It was from here that I saw what stragglers had reported for several days past, and what we had refused to believe. Cossacks, tired of killing our stragglers and taking prisoners whom they were obliged to march to the rear, thus depriving themselves for that amount of time of the chance of daily booty, robbed everyone they came across, taking their clothes, if they had decent ones, and sending them away practically naked. I have seen cases in

which they gave in exchange inferior clothing which they had taken from someone else, or from some poor wretch dead by the road-side. Every one of these Cossacks had a pile of old clothes, partly under their saddles and looking like pannels, and partly over them and looking like cushions. They can never have been raised so high on their horses before. I spoke with some of these unfortunate stragglers whom I had seen robbed quite near the bridge, and with others who had been stripped farther away. They confirmed the particulars I have given, and added that the Cossacks, when no superior officers were about, drove them along in front of them like a herd of cattle.

On the 3rd we reached Molodetchna, where fourteen despatches from Paris¹ were received all at once, as well as despatches from all along the line and the Duke of Bassano's news about the Austrian advance and the movements of Loison's division, which was to have gone to Oschmiana.² He had no encouraging information to give about the levies of Polish cavalry. Cossacks were out of the question. The Duchy was exhausted, and particularly lacked money; and the Emperor, whose object was to give as little as possible, was for this reason deprived of the Cossacks on whom he had been counting, and whom he had daily been expecting to meet.

Lithuania had no more resources than the Duchy. Laid waste by war, it was barely able to fulfil its first quota of troops. We lacked Lithuanian Cossacks, as we lacked Cossacks

¹ *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 418 says: "On the 3rd, the twenty despatches which had accumulated were found at Molodetchna. These despatches contained all the letters which were written from Paris between 1st and 19th November."

² In October, Loison had been given command of the 34th Division (formerly Morand's division, 4th of the 11th Corps). This division ceased to be part of the 11th Corps on October 15, 1812. It had been in Wilna, under the command of Colonel Martini, from November 21st. Loison personally stayed at Königsberg, and did not resume his place at the head of his division until after December 8th. Cf. Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *Campagne de 1813, les Préliminaires*, I, 56.

from the Duchy, as we lacked all the other supports on which the Emperor had counted. Henceforth, it was clear that neither Wilna nor even the Niemen would be the end of the army's retreat, and therefore of our troubles. On that same day, three Russian peasants alarmed all the transport section. A number of infantrymen, however, rallied, and they made off, after looting two carriages belonging to Generals. As for the Cossacks, they never appeared where there were five or six bayonets near each other.

The Emperor was very busy reading his despatches from France, and everyone was glad to have news from home. In Paris there had been some uneasiness about the interruption of news from the army, but no conception of the extent of our disasters. The memory of the Emperor's exploits maintained confidence, and caused such a sense of security that the sensation produced by this long silence had been less marked, less disturbing, than there had been reason to fear.

The Emperor instructed me to send M. Anatole de Montesquiou, the Prince of Neuchâtel's aide-de-camp, to Paris to give his news verbally to the Empress.¹ His object was to prepare public opinion for the bulletin, on which he had been occupied since we crossed the Beresina, by the details that this officer would give.

The Emperor always ridiculed talk of the removal of the Ministry and of the Prefect of Police. The despatches from Paris revived the topic of the Malet affair. The Emperor appeared to be quite satisfied with the state of public opinion since this conspiracy, particularly during the interruption of

¹ Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, 413) says that Napoleon sent Montesquiou off in the night of the 2nd-3rd, and consequently from Selitche. This date is confirmed by Castellane (*Journal*, I, 199). Also, the instructions intended for Montesquiou are dated December 2nd from Selitche, and states: "M. de Montesquiou will start at once." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19364.) Ambroise-Anatole-Augustin de Montesquiou-Fezensac, born in Paris on August 8, 1788, died at Courtanveaux (Sarthe) on January 22, 1878, was made a captain at Wagram. He was promoted in 1813 to colonel and aide-de-camp to the Emperor, Brigadier-General on April 2, 1831, and was created a peer on July 20, 1841.

news from the army. He was satisfied with all the details about the administration, in general with everything, and said as much to the Prince of Neuchâtel, who repeated his remarks to me that same evening.

The Emperor was occupied with the famous bulletin. He was still determined to hide none of his disasters in order to impress them on everyone before his arrival. Then, he said, his presence would both calm and reassure public opinion. The more overwhelming our disasters were, the more they were multiplied with every day that passed and every step we took, and the more indispensable his return to France became. He summoned me one evening, and repeated to me what I had already heard from the Prince of Neuchâtel.

"In the existing state of affairs," he said to me, "I can only hold my grip on Europe from the Tuileries."

As usual, however, in spite of any remarks I might make to him, he let there be no doubt that the army was to take up its position at Wilna, and would have its winter quarters there. He counted on being able to set off in less than forty-eight hours; as soon, in fact, as he was in contact with the troops coming from Wilna, when, in his opinion, the army would run no more serious risks. He was eager to start so as to forestall the news of our disasters. It is to be noted that, for the most part, nothing was known about them. Confidence in his genius, and the habit of seeing him triumph over even greater obstacles, were such that public opinion tended to minimize rather than exaggerate such news as had transpired of our disasters. The Emperor was in a hurry to start. He thought that communications would be easier and surer immediately, rather than a few days later, because Russian partisans would not yet have had time to try, as they certainly would whilst the army was getting into position, attacks on the rear. He allowed me to make certain preliminary arrangements so that nothing should delay his departure when it was once decided.

The Emperor again asked me whether I thought he ought to give the Viceroy or the King of Naples command of the army. I said, as I had in previous conversations, that the

Viceroy was the more popular in the army and enjoyed more of its confidence than the King of Naples, whose rare courage was fully recognized; that the latter, though a hero on the battlefield, was generally thought to possess neither the force of character, the sense of order nor the foresight necessary to save the remains of the army and reorganize it; that, without for a moment overlooking his services at the Moskowa and on other occasions, he had been accused of having an insatiable appetite for glory, of having instigated His Majesty to undertake the Moscow expedition, and of having lost the magnificent force of cavalry which started on the campaign; that it was no longer a question of charging the enemy, but that the present need was to provide the army with the wherewithal to live so as to reorganize it and halt the enemy.

The Emperor seemed to find my observations sound. He even subscribed to the opinion generally held about the King, but pointed out that his rank made it impossible for him to be put under the orders of the Viceroy. Thus he was obliged to give the preference to the King, who would have left the army if the supreme command had been entrusted to Prince Eugène. He added that the Prince of Neuchâtel took the same view, that he was leaving him to see to everything, and that he preferred the King, whose rank, age and reputation would be more imposing in the eyes of the Marshals, and whose proved courage counted for something where the Russians were concerned. Certain other remarks of the Emperor which he had made formerly, and which I recollected because they cropped up again in the course of this conversation, gave me the idea (at least I fancied I could trace such a thought) that he would prefer to leave to his brother-in-law the honour of rallying the army, and that he did not care about his stepson having credit for this further achievement in the eyes of the army and of France. With all his greatness of character, this distrust of his relatives, and, in general, of everyone who had acquired a personal reputation, was entirely in keeping with the Emperor's idea of looking at things.

He spoke to me again about the persons he would take with him. His choice was limited to myself, who was to start

with him, to the Duke of Friuli¹ and the Count of Lobau, who were to follow after him, and to M. Wonsowicz, a Polish officer who had been through the whole campaign, a man of proved courage and devotion.² It was arranged that the Emperor's other aides-de-camp and the officers of his suite should rejoin him in succession. Each week the Prince of Neuchâtel was to send two of his orderly officers to him.³ He was to have an escort only as far as Wilna. This would be provided by the Neapolitan cavalry, which was attached to Loison's division. Beyond Wilna, he would travel under the name of the Duke of Vicenza.

I gave orders, therefore, to the post-stages, under the pretext of making sure that arrangements existed for officers sent with despatches; but our troops soon disorganized these relays, and it was necessary to make other arrangements by sending ahead several transport detachments whose horses would serve our purpose. Our situation was such that the smallest things were liable to put obstacles, even insurmountable obstacles, in our way, unless steps were taken long in advance. For instance, we should not have been able to make use of our relays to get along the road, which was like a sheet of glass, if I had not kept under lock and key a sack of coal for the purpose of forging shoes for the horses which were to carry us.⁴

The cold was so severe, even by the forge fire, that the farriers could only work in gloves, and could not remain for one moment without rubbing their hands to prevent them

¹ Duroc.

² Count Dunin Wonsowicz. He married the Countess Potocka, formerly Anna Tyszkiewicz, the author of the *Mémoires*.

³ Regarding this, see in Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 454) a letter from the Emperor to the Duke of Vicenza, dated from Smorgoni, December 5th, ordering an orderly officer to be instructed to set out each two days, one to proceed via Warsaw and the following via Danzig. The first to start was M. de Mortemart; the second Gourgaud, the third Christin. The original of this letter is preserved in the Caulaincourt archives, file 8.

⁴ We could only do our forging at night because the transport wagons were from twelve to fifteen hours on the move each day. (*Caulaincourt's note*.)

from freezing. These particulars, in any other circumstances quite insignificant, give some idea of the causes of our failure, and of all that would have had to have been foreseen to avoid it. Our failure was, for the most part, due rather to such insignificant circumstances than to exhaustion or attacks from the enemy.

The Emperor was well satisfied with the particulars transmitted to him by M. de Bassano regarding the tactics that he had just instructed the Prince of Schwarzenberg¹ to carry out, and, in general, pleased with everything this Minister had done and ordered whilst communications were interrupted. He did not, however, refer with the same satisfaction to what had been done in regard to raising the levies he had ordered in Poland. In this respect, he complained a great deal about M. de Pradt and about all his agents at Wilna and Warsaw. The promised Cossacks had not even been recruited, a fact which upset the Emperor the more in that he had been openly attributing all his defeats since Smolensk to the lack of light cavalry. Wanting to vent his annoyance, he reverted to the subject of the Turkish peace and to the union between Russia and Sweden. The news from France, on the other hand, was a real consolation. The Emperor spoke of this with the utmost satisfaction, and with high praise for the Empress's conduct, for her prudence, and for the attachment to him that she had shown, etc.

"These difficult circumstances," he went on, "form her power of judgment, and give her assurance and far-sightedness which will win the nation's heart. She is just the woman I needed, kind, good, loving as German women are. She doesn't busy herself with intrigues. She has a sense of order, and concerns herself only with me and her son."

The Arch-Chancellor was also referred to in flattering terms, as well as the Ministers.

On the 4th, headquarters were at Bienica,² and on the 5th at Smorgoni, where a member of the Wilna Government and

¹ Maret had given renewed orders to Schwarzenberg to move closer to the army.

² Six and a half leagues from Molodetchna.

Count van Hogendorp,¹ aide-de-camp to the Emperor and governor of the town, awaited him.² The Emperor interviewed them, and then at once sent them off again. He summoned me once more to dictate to me his final orders:

“Smorgoni, 5 December, noon.

“The Emperor is leaving at 10 o'clock in the evening. He is to be accompanied by 200 men from his Guard. From the posting house Smorgoni Oschmiana as far as Oschmiana by an infantry regiment, which will pass the night four leagues from here, orders to this effect to be given by General van Hogendorp.

“Five hundred good horses belonging to the Guard to be sent to a point one league from Oschmiana. Staff officers from the infantry regiment and the squadron of lancers from the Guard to be placed in relays between Smorgoni and Oschmiana.

“The Neapolitans,³ who have passed this night between Wilna and Oschmiana, to arrange for 100 horses to be at Miedniki and 100 at Rumsziki.

“General van Hogendorp to stop, wherever he finds it, the

¹ Dirk van Hogendorp, born at Heenvliet (Holland) on October 3, 1761, died at Rio de Janeiro on October 20, 1822, successively Ambassador at Petersburg, Governor of Java, War Minister of Spain (1806-7) in the reign of Louis Bonaparte, then entrusted with diplomatic missions. Napoleon appointed him a General of Division in January 1811, and his aide-de-camp in the following March. On June 1, 1812, he became Governor of Breslau. Thence he was transferred to the governorship of Königsberg. Finally, on July 8, 1812, he was appointed Governor of Lithuania at Wilna. He was designated on August 24th President of the Provisional Commission of the Government of Wilna.

² There is undoubtedly a copying error here in the manuscript of the *Mémoires*. In fact, it was at Bicnica that Napoleon received General van Hogendorp, whom he summoned from Wilna. Hogendorp has given his account of his journey in his *Mémoires*, published by his grandson, M. le Comte D. C. A. Van Hogendorp, the Hague, Nijhoff, 1887, 331.

³ Two regiments of light infantry and of Neapolitan Guards had been sent ahead of the army from Wilna to Oschmiana with Loison's division.

infantry regiment due to arrive at Wilna on the 6th, and to arrange for 100 horses to be half-way along the Kovno road. Also, to see that an escort of 60 men is ready at Wilna, and the post-horses the Master of the Horse will need from Smorgoni to beyond Wilkowiski. General van Hogendorp to return at once to Wilna and to instruct the Duke of Bassano to wait upon the Emperor immediately at Smorgoni.

"The Emperor to start with the Duke of Vicenza in His Majesty's carriage; M. Wonsowicz in front, a footman behind;¹

"The Grand Marshal, the Count of Lobau, a footman, a workman in a barouche;

"Baron Fain,² the valet Constant,³ someone in charge of documents and a clerk in a barouche;

"The Master of the Horse to summon the King of Naples, the Viceroy and the Marshals to be at headquarters at seven o'clock. Also to take an order from the Major-General to proceed to Paris with his secretary Reyneval,⁴ his couriers and his servants."

¹ Besides this footman, the Emperor took Roustam. See *Mémoires inédits de Roustam* in the *Revue rétrospective*, 1888, VIII, 155.

² Agathon-Jean-François, Baron Fain, born in Paris on January 11, 1778, at sixteen entered the office of the Military Committee of the Convention, then chief of the Directory's Secretariat in January 1806, appointed Secretary-Archivist of the Emperor's Secretariat, referendary to the Council of State in 1811. In 1813 he became First Secretary to the Cabinet, and died in Paris on September 16, 1837.

³ Louis-Constant Wairy, born at Peruelz (Belgium) on December 2, 1778, personal valet in the service of Eugène de Beauharnais in 1799, was transferred to Bonaparte's service in March 1800. He basely deserted the Emperor in 1814.

⁴ The Emperor was going to travel under the name of Count F. J. M. Gérard de Reyneval, born at Versailles on October 8, 1778, died in Spain on August 16, 1836; at this time, First Embassy Secretary attached to the Duke of Vicenza. Reyneval was later Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1821), French Ambassador in Prussia, Switzerland and at Vienna under the Restoration, in Spain under Louis-Philippe, who raised him to the peerage.

The Emperor then repeated what he had already said in the morning at Bienica—that he had good news from the Duke of Taranto,¹ that the Prince of Schwarzenberg was ahead, that Loison's forces were considerable, that various regiments were arriving at Wilna and others on the Niemen; that the Wilna shops, and even the Kovno shops, were well supplied, and that the troopers, once they got hold of food and clothing, would soon rejoin the ranks. There could be no doubt, in his opinion, that the retreat and privations would end at the same time.

Having tried on previous occasions to explain the real state of affairs to the Emperor, and what I foresaw would come to pass, I listened this time without making any reply.

"Why don't you answer? . . . What is your opinion, then?"

"I have grave doubts, Sire, as to whether the Niemen will be the end of disorder and as to whether the army will rally there. All the fresh troops ought to be sent to take up their positions wherever Your Majesty thinks we can really stop, since contact with our disorderly forces will spread disorder amongst them, and thus lose us everything."

"So you think that Wilna ought to be evacuated?"

"Unquestionably, Sire, and as soon as possible."

"You are laughing at me! The Russians are not in a fit state to proceed there now, and you know as well as I do that our stragglers don't give a damn for the Cossacks."

The Emperor was convinced that more resources could be got together in eight days at Wilna to resist the Russians than they would be able to collect in a month. In his mind's eye he saw Poland arming all her peasants to drive away the Cossacks, the French Army tripling in size because it had food and clothing, and because its reinforcements were now within reach, whereas the Russians were leaving theirs farther and farther behind. The Emperor, as at Moscow, refused to take into account the fact that the climate favoured the Russians

¹ Macdonald was still in front of Riga.

more than us. Already he saw our cantonments, even our advance-posts, protected by the Poles, who were acclimatized and ready, with infantry as well as cavalry, to defend their country and their homes. He even saw our infantry, when once it had eaten its fill, less than fifteen days hence, braving the cold and chasing away the Cossacks. The Emperor seemed to have no doubts about it all, and if I failed to alter his opinion by frankly expressing an opposite one, at least my doing so did not irritate him, since he discussed the situation for a long while with me.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was greatly upset at having to remain behind, although the Emperor, in accordance with his wishes, had made the King of Naples commander-in-chief. The thought that he would be able to be of real service to the Emperor by remaining with the army, and that the presence of someone accustomed to being obeyed was necessary for the maintenance of good relations, consoled him, for his devotion and attachment to the Emperor was heartfelt. He, too, saw how many difficulties there would be in rallying the army, not because of any lack of fresh troops (he had enough at his disposition, and the Guard still formed a satisfactory basis for reorganization), but because the Emperor's departure, which otherwise he believed to be necessary, would provide a pretext for disorder, which might well complete the process of disorganization. At bottom, however, he was far from foreseeing what actually happened, although the troops from the Dwina and Belluno's men were in course of disintegration every day.

The King of Naples, the Viceroy, the Marshals, the Dukes of Elchingen, Treviso, Istria and Danzig, the Prince of Eckmühl, all of them with the exception of the Duke of Belluno, who was in command of the rear-guard, arrived in turn. They constituted a sort of council to which the Emperor announced his determination to go to Paris. His manner was that of someone submitting a project for their opinion on it; and they were unanimous in urging him to go. All the reasons prepared in advance in our conversations, and all the motives which led him to make this important

decision, were examined again. The Emperor gave everyone the orders intended for him. General Lauriston was to go to Warsaw to organize the defence of that region, and to assemble all available troops there, General Rapp to Danzig, etc.

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¹ Macdo

CHAPTER III

By Sledge with the Emperor: From Smorgoni to Warsaw

AT exactly ten o'clock in the evening we got into the carriage.¹ The Emperor and I were in his travelling carriage; the gallant Wonsowicz was on horseback, riding beside the carriage, and Roustam, with the outriders Fagalde and Amodru,² were also on horseback. One of them went ahead to order post-horses at Oschmiana. The Duke of Friuli and the Count Lobau followed in one carriage,³ Baron Fain and M. Constant in a second.⁴ The necessary preparations

¹ On December 5, 1812. The Baron de Bourgoing, who was present at this departure, says that it took place at eight o'clock (*Souvenirs militaires du baron de Bourgoing*, by Baron Pierre de Bourgoing, p. 176). Fain says nine o'clock (*Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 2). Ali says it was around eight or nine (*Souvenirs du mameluck Ali, Louis-Etienne Saint-Denis*, ed. by G. Michaut, p. 51). Ségur and Castellane, however, confirm the time given by Caulaincourt, which is also the hour named in the original orders.

² Amodru was appointed second outrider in 1813 and followed Napoleon to Elba. He was his outrider at Waterloo and after the battle he brought the saddle-horses back to Avesnes. He did not rejoin the Emperor till Laon. He set out with him on the journey from Malmaison to Rochefort; but when the Emperor ordered him to hide the belt and hunting-knife he wore, which were part of the uniform of the Imperial Household, and which might have betrayed his incognito, Amodru took offence and left the party.

³ They left Smorgoni several hours after the Emperor.

⁴ The order of the fifth, which appointed to this third vehicle, beside Fain and Constant, one footman and one workman, must have been modified later; for when it reached Paris it contained Fain, Baron Mounier, General Bacler d'Albe, Director of the Topographical Department, and Yvan, the Surgeon-in-Ordinary to the Emperor. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 7.) If one puts any faith in the spurious memoirs of Constant (*Mémoires*, III, 472), one would have to believe that he travelled alone and arrived in Paris five or six days after the Emperor.

had been so carefully made, the secret so well kept, that no one had the least suspicion of what was happening;¹ with the exception of the Grand Marshal and Baron Fain, even those who set out on this journey were not notified till half-past seven, when the Marshals heard of it.²

The Emperor reached Oschmiana about midnight.³ Loison's division and a detachment of the Neapolitan cavalry had taken up their position there during the afternoon. The troops were full of confidence, in the belief that they were covered by the main army; consequently the outposts were badly placed, and in addition badly manned. The main body of the division was quartered in the town, where everyone shut himself indoors to escape the cold, which was extreme. Shortly before the Emperor's arrival, a Russian commanding some irregular troops had taken advantage of this confidence to carry out a raid through the town with Cossacks and hussars. The slaughter of a few sentinels and the capture of a few men were the only result of his expedition.⁴ The firing from every house soon forced the Russians to a hurried retreat, whereupon they took up a position overlooking the town, which they bombarded for some time. This was the state of affairs when

¹ This cannot have been the case if one is to believe the account of Joseph Grabowski (*Mémoires militaires*, p. 86): "The Emperor travelled incognito under the name of Comte Caulaincourt. As he passed through the bivouacs of the Old Guard, the grumblers among them called out by way of good-bye: 'Ah, it's Caulaincourt going by—yes, *Colin-qui-court*.'" The anecdote, however, seems to have been a fabricated setting for this rather limping play of words—one which had been already used by the Royalists at the time of the d'Enghien affair.

² "Lobau did not even have time to say a word to his nephew; the carriage was already brought round when they notified him that he was to travel in it." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 201.)

³ "He was sleeping soundly in his carriage." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, p. 178.)

⁴ This attack was carried out by the Russian Colonel Seslawin at nightfall on December 5th. When the French troops drove them off, the Russians took up a position farther west, only a little way off the road. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 3, and Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, p. 195.)

the Emperor arrived. M. van Hogendorp, who carried the orders dictated by the Emperor, and even the ordinary courier, had barely preceded us, so that we had to wait for the horses and the Neapolitans.¹

The Emperor hesitated a moment in favour of waiting till daylight. The carriage following us had not yet arrived. We held a sort of council to decide also whether it would not be better to send a few infantry outposts to keep the road open, in case the Russians tried to occupy it; this precaution, however, would have delayed us, and might have informed the enemy of the Emperor's departure, of which he was then still in ignorance.² We therefore decided to put a small advance-guard along the road, composed of the mounted Neapolitans. We sent two further advance-guards to follow them in echelon. The rest were divided, half going in front of us and half behind. The Emperor's saddle-horses, which had followed us from Smorgoni, were ordered to come on as far as Miedniki. The cold was increasing, and the horses of the escort could not keep their feet. Of all the detachments, there were not fifteen men still with us when we reached the relay, and hardly eight, including the General and some officers, as we approached Wilna.³

¹ See above, the order of December 5th. These men had been delayed by sheet-ice formed after the thaw.

² Cf. Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 178. One should bear in mind that for this period the *Souvenirs militaires du Baron de Bourgoing* are especially valuable, because the author had before him an unpublished account prepared by Wonsowicz himself from which to draw his history of the Emperor's journey.

³ The General was Lefebvre-Desnouettes, Colonel of the Light Horse of the Guard, who, after selecting the men that were to form the Emperor's escort, accompanied him for some time. The escort, which was changed at Oschmiana, consisted of a hundred Polish lancers under the command of Colonel Stoïkowski. After Oschmiana, Lefebvre-Desnouettes rode on the coachman's seat of the Emperor's carriage. (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 179.) After the posting-house at Rownopol the Poles, of whom there were already no more than 36, were replaced by a detachment of Neapolitan Horse-Guards commanded by the Duke of Rocca-Romana. The Emperor set out again from Oschmiana at two o'clock in the morning of December 6th.

At a league's distance from the town¹ and at the break of day we met the Duke of Bassano, who joined the Emperor as I left him; and, as the Emperor did not wish to enter the town, I went ahead in M. de Bassano's carriage to carry the orders to the Government and make further arrangements for our journey. It was well that I went to Wilna myself, as M. van Hogendorp, being only just arrived and having to rouse to action people who were just leaving M. de Bassano's ball, had so far been able to get nothing prepared.² They danced while others froze to death. The inhabitants of Wilna had no conception of our situation, of what had already happened, or of what was to come. I mustered a dozen men for the escort. There were no post-horses. I had to take those of M. de Bassano, which took us on the next relay. No one had any suspicion that the Emperor was so near.

The Emperor stopped to change horses in the suburbs of the town.³ I arrived there at almost the same time, and we set out immediately. In Wilna I had bought fur-lined boots for all the travellers of our party; and they thanked me for them more than once when we met later in Paris, for they would certainly have arrived there with some limb frost-bitten if it had not been for this precaution. The Duke of Friuli and M. de Lobau arrived as we were leaving. The Neapolitans, who were still acting as escort, had their hands or

¹ "At the little town Miedniki, seat of the bishopric of Samogitie," says Bourgoing (*Souvenirs*, 188). The Duke of Bassano took Caulaincourt's seat in the Emperor's carriage, in order to have some conversation with him, as far as Wilna. Cf. Ernout, *Maret, duc de Bassano*, 469.

² "The Duke of Vicenza came to me to ask for post-horses, since the Emperor had not come into the town, but had stopped in a house in the outskirts, on the road to Kowno. When I had supplied an escort and fresh horses I thought to join him, but he had been in such haste that he was already gone." (*Mémoires*, p. 325.)

³ The Emperor, fearing he might be recognized, made a circuit of the town and halted, says Bourgoing (*Souvenirs*, p. 92), "in one of the suburbs, in a country house half destroyed by fire." The suburb in question is Kowno, where the Emperor halted on December 6th, from a quarter-past ten till half-past eleven.

feet frost-bitten. I found the commanding officer¹ with both his hands pressed against the stove. He expected to relieve the acute pain, and I had great difficulty in making him realize that he was risking the loss of his hands, and in making him go out and rub them with snow—a treatment which so increased his sufferings that he was unable to continue.

M. Wonsowicz, having no more led-horses, and being himself tired, took the footman's seat of the Emperor's carriage. We reached Kowno two hours before dawn.² The courier had had a fire lit in a kind of tavern, kept by an Italian scullion who had set himself up there since the passage of the army.³ The meal seemed superb because it was hot. Good bread, fowl, a table and chairs, a table-cloth—all these were novelties to us. Only the Emperor had been well served throughout the retreat: that is to say he had always had white bread, linen, his Chambertin, good oil, beef or mutton, rice, and beans or lentils, his favourite vegetables. The Grand Marshal and M. de Lobau rejoined us here. I do not remember that I ever suffered so much from cold as on the journey from Wilna to Kowno. The thermometer had passed twenty degrees. Although the Emperor was dressed in thick wool and covered with a good rug, with his legs in fur boots and then in a bag made of a bear's skin, yet he complained of the cold to such an extent that I had to cover him with half my own bear-skin rug. Breath froze on the lips, forming small icicles under the nose, on the eyebrows, and round the eyelids. All the clothwork of the carriage, and particularly the hood, where our breath rose, was frozen hard and white. When we reached Kowno the Emperor was shivering as with the ague.

At Rumsiszki we found a regiment on the line of march. On the way from Wilna to Kowno the Emperor again raised

¹ The Duke of Rocca-Romana.

² At five in the morning of December 7th.

³ "In a hotel run by a Frenchman. They prepared a big fire and a good breakfast for the Emperor." (Roustam, *Mémoires, Revue rétrospective*, VIII, 157.)

the problem whether he should take, as he had first intended, the direct route through Königsberg.¹ Would it be prudent, with the possibility that some incident would lead to his recognition, to cross the whole breadth of Prussia? We had a commandant in every town, but apart from the regiments on the line of march we had no troops.

On the other hand, there was so much snow that we might be seriously delayed if we followed a less frequented road, on which there were no post-horses. These considerations made us hesitate to take the road through the Duchy of Warsaw, which from other points of view was the safer. If we were not to be delayed, however, it was necessary to make up our minds, so that we could order the horses. After again weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement we came to a decision. I say we, because the Emperor refused to judge the question and insisted that I alone should decide—which, I confess, seemed to me a heavy responsibility, and worried me considerably. I took a chance, and sent forward along the road to Königsberg, though leaving myself free to change direction at Mariampol if I heard that the roads through the Duchy were passable.

Fagalde was sent in advance as far as Gumbinnen.² It was not without some difficulty that we climbed the almost perpendicular slope which one must surmount on leaving Kowno for Mariampol.³ We were forced to get down. As the horses were falling or losing their foothold at every moment, the carriage was several times on the point of running backwards and falling over the precipice. We heaved at the wheels, and at last reached Mariampol. I held a consultation with the master of the posting-house, an honest fellow full of zeal and good feeling. He assured me that the roads were passable, and that if we gave him two hours start he would

¹ Going on to Paris by way of Posen.

² On the road to Königsberg.

³ The steepness of this climb was to cause a disaster some days later. See General Griois, *Mémoires*, ed. by A. Chuquet, 1909, II, 198.

undertake to arrange relays of horses for us as far as Warsaw, going by Augustowo. The desire to meet his despatches from France on the way made the Emperor incline a little toward the road to Königsberg; but he left the final choice to me. I did not hesitate. I sent instructions to Fagalde to rejoin us at Posen; and I sent the post-master along the road to Warsaw with instructions to order horses in my name as far forward as Pultusk, where he was to wait for us. As he had seen the Emperor before, he recognized him when we first arrived; he promised me, however, not to mention his name, and he kept to his word. The Emperor spoke to him, which delighted him.

We set out an hour after him, and found peasants' horses everywhere: but as our carriage was on wheels and there was no time to fit runners on it, we were unable to get through the snow, which was piled up everywhere to a considerable height. The sleighs of the couriers, on the other hand, flew over the surface. Chance led me to find a sleigh that was covered in at the first relay station;¹ and this was a piece of good fortune in view of the Emperor's impatience to reach his destination. The gentleman to whom it belonged having yielded it to me willingly for a few gold pieces, the Emperor and I took our places in it.² We left the carriage in the charge of the footman, who had gallantly followed it seated on the footman's step. The Emperor hardly gave us time to transfer our rugs and arms; for lack of space in the sleigh he was even forced to abandon the toilet equipment which was so

¹ The relay station at Gragow. (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 193.)

² "The postmaster (at Gragow) then said the squire of the neighbourhood had built for his daughter, recently married, a very comfortable berline mounted on sleigh-runners. This Polish gentleman at first refused to sell it, no matter what price was offered him; he only yielded to the representations that were made to him when he heard that the carriage was intended for the Emperor. He then asked no other consideration for parting with it than that he should be presented to him. To this the Emperor consented, but he would not accept the gift, for which he paid 1000 ducats (or 10,000 francs)." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs de l'expédition de Russie*, III, 114.)

useful to him.¹ Uncomfortably seated, and still worse supported and closed in, the Emperor sacrificed everything which makes a long journey endurable for the sake of arriving sooner. Henceforward we travelled much more easily and even quickly. The Grand Marshal, who had again caught up with us at Mariampol, had fallen behind again, a quarter of a league out of the town. After that we did not again see either a carriage or a man of those who left Smorgoni with the Emperor.

Since we had been within the Duchy² the Emperor had been very cheerful, and talked all the time about the army and about Paris. He did not question that the army would remain at Wilna, and did not in the least recognize the extent of his losses.

"Wilna is well stocked with food, and will put everything to rights again," he said to me. "There is more material there than they can need to stand up to the enemy. The Russians will be at least as tired as we are, and suffer just as much from the cold; they are certain to go into permanent camp. Nothing will be seen of them but Cossacks. The orders and recommendations I left with M. de Bassano will mend everything. I anticipated everything in those. He is confident of Schwarzenberg's sense of honour, and says he will hold his position and defend the Duchy. M. de Bassano has written to him, as well as to Vienna and Berlin."

The Emperor was anxious only about the effect of our reverses upon those two Courts; but his return to Paris would restore his political ascendancy.

"Our disasters," he said, "will make a great sensation in France, but my arrival will counterbalance the evil consequences."

¹ "The berline was harnessed without delay, and the Emperor took his seat in it, together with the Duke of Vicenza and Comte Wonsowicz. The maneluke was put on the driver's seat. . . . General Lefebvre-Desnouettes was alone able to follow, in a little sleigh which he had promptly obtained." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs*, 194.)

² The Emperor had entered the Duchy of Warsaw by crossing the Niemen at Kowno.

He planned to use his passage through Warsaw to put energy into the Poles.

"If they really want to be a nation, they'll rise in a body against their enemies," he added. "And if they do, I shall take up arms to defend them. I should be able to grant later on to Austria those concessions she has so much at heart; then we could proclaim the re-establishment of Poland. Austria has a greater interest in that than I have because she lies nearer to the colossus of Russia. If the Poles don't do as they should, that will simplify things for France and for everyone else; for peace with Russia will then be easy."

He chose to believe, or at least tried to make me think so, that all the Cabinets of Europe, even those most wounded in pride by the power of France, were concerned that the Cossacks should not be allowed to cross the Niemen.

"The Russians should be viewed by everyone as a scourge," he said further. "The war against Russia is a war which is wholly in the interests—if those interests are rightly judged—of the older Europe and of civilization. The Austrian Emperor and M. de Metternich realize this so well that they often said as much to me at Dresden. The Emperor Francis understands perfectly the weak and shifty character of the Tsar Alexander, and mistrusts him, having already been deceived by his protestations and tricked by his promises. The Viennese Government understands perfectly that, apart from her contact with Austria over a long frontier, and all the divergent interests arising from such a situation, the designs of Russia upon Turkey make her doubly dangerous. The reverses that France has just suffered will put an end to all jealousies and quiet all the anxieties that may have sprung from her power or influence. Europe should think of only one enemy. And that enemy is the colossus of Russia."

I answered the Emperor frankly.

"In fact, it is Your Majesty they fear. It is Your Majesty who is the cause of everyone's anxiety and prevents them from seeing other dangers. The Governments are afraid of a universal monarchy. Your dynasty is already spreading everywhere, and the other dynasties fear to see it established

in their own countries. At the moment, what damages the interests of all Germany is the system of taxation adopted three years ago. And the political inquisition set up by certain tactless representatives offends national opinion, wounds everyone's self-respect, and runs counter to all their habits of thought. All these causes and considerations, which are perhaps partly hidden from Your Majesty, make the hatred of you into a national force. And what has stirred up the people even more than the Governments is the military regime imposed upon Germany under the administration of the Prince of Eckmühl."¹

The Emperor was so far from checking my frankness that he listened and replied not only without ill-humour but with real cordiality. From the way in which he received and discussed several of my remarks, one would have thought he had no immediate concern in them. He smiled at the things which touched him nearest, maintaining an air of taking them in good part and of wishing to encourage me in saying all that I thought. At the things which doubtless seemed to him rather strongly expressed he felt for my ear to tweak it; and as he could not find it under my bonnet, my neck or my cheek received the pinch—a kindly rather than an irritable one. He was in such a good mood that he admitted the truth of some of the points I brought forward. Others he refuted. Concerning others he remarked that particular interest might here and there have been disturbed by police measures, or by combinations of circumstances which had nothing to do with the end he had in view. The people, however, were too enlightened, he said, not to see, from the very system on which the countries he had united were administered, that our laws, under which they now lived, offered real guarantees to every citizen against all arbitrary action. He insisted that our administration was based upon principles that were broadly

¹ Since the 1st of January, 1810, Davout had been in command of the army in Germany, which after November 1, 1811, was called the Army of Observation of the Elbe. He was at the same time Governor of Hamburg (from December 1, 1810) and commanding officer of the 31st Military Division (from August 22, 1811).

conceived, noble, adapted to the ideas of the country, and suited to the real needs of the people. He went on to say:

"I could treat them like conquered countries, but I administer them like *départements* of France. They are wrong to complain. It is the checks on trade that irk them. But those depend on considerations of a higher order, to which the interests of France must also yield. Only peace with England can end those inconveniences and their complaints. They need only be patient. Two years of persevering effort will bring about the fall of the English Government. England will be forced to conclude a peace consistent with the commercial rights of all nations. Then they will forget the inconveniences they complain of, while the consequent prosperity, and the state of affairs that will then be established, will for the most part provide means for the prompt repair of all their losses."

The Emperor complained that in these days everyone obstinately refused to look beyond the little circle of his own difficulties. Even the most capable men held to this narrow range of vision. Whereas it needed no more than a little goodwill to realize all the advantages they were on the point of enjoying as a result of a larger view. All the sacrifices were made and it needed only patience to gather in the harvest. It was not given to everybody to judge the new road he had pointed out. The system he had been forced to adopt against England could be judged, together with everything that followed from it, only after the passage of some years. It ran counter to too many habits and damaged too many petty interests not to give rise to a large number of discontented people. And it was of these malcontents that the forces of stupidity and blind hate were now taking advantage. He added that the Continental System was none the less a great conception, and destined to become a voluntary conception, the desire of all the peoples: for it was as much to the interest of individuals as it was to the interest of the Continent as a whole. Prohibition against prohibitionists was common justice. Moreover, in his desire to establish on the Continent industries that would make it independent of England, he had

had no choice of means; he had adopted the sole method which would really hit the prosperity of England. It was a great undertaking; and only he could carry it out. If the present opportunity were allowed to pass, another would not come; for the enterprise had needed just that combination of circumstances which had in fact obtained in Europe, during the last few years. He already had proof that he had not been mistaken, and could cite in support of his plea the flourishing condition of industry, not only in the original territory of France but also in Germany—and that although they had not yet ceased from a state of war.

The Emperor inferred from this that the system had built up the industries of France and Germany. It would therefore, he said, be a source of wealth which would replace the foreign trade which we were at present missing. The benefit would be still more perceptible a little later. In less than three years the Rhineland, Germany, the very countries which were most hotly opposed to the prohibitions, would do justice to his foresight and his achievements. To have taught the French and the Germans that they could themselves earn the money which English industries had previously drawn out of the country was a great victory over the London Government. This result alone would immortalize his reign, through the internal prosperity it would bring to France and Germany.

The Emperor concluded from this that what I referred to as the colossus of the power of France was, at that time, a state of affairs wholly advantageous to Europe, since it was the only way to check the excessive pretensions of the English. England, he added, by the very fact that she weighed less than he with the Cabinets of Europe, weighed all the more heavily upon the people of Europe. For she seized for herself alone all the benefits of industrial development. As an island, she doubtless excited less jealousy and anxiety in the minds of Governments that had no coast-lines. Her maritime ascendancy seemed for this reason less burdensome to the Governments of Europe than the ascendancy of France. Her situation precluded the danger of territorial disputes with them. But her exclusive commercial policy was none the less damaging

to individual interests. This fact was not willingly recognized at the present time because the various Governments found it convenient to go to London for subsidies when they wanted them; and it mattered little to them if the cash they received had come from the pockets of their subjects—or rather, had been earned at the expense of these subjects, whose industries would never be able to develop so long as the English monopoly continued.

The Emperor admitted that the annexation of Hamburg and of Lubeck,¹ towns whose independence was useful to commerce, must have alarmed the traders as well as the Governments of Europe, because these changes were thought to indicate a policy which would be continued.

But he justified these measures of expediency by the necessity of confronting England, along that coast, with our own rigid system of prohibition of imports. He added that, as he was in conflict with the actual trade of the towns, he must win over the opinion of all thinking persons. Constitutional government and our code of laws would bring about that change. Being unable to maintain an army of 25,000 men in the new *départements*, he had taken these measures to ensure us the confidence of the inhabitants. This step, he added further, which was wholly advantageous to the greatest number and in the true interest of the land-owners, already counterbalanced the opposition of the maritime trading interests, which could not be expected to become friendly so long as they could not resume their activities and find outlets for their capital.

The Emperor's opinion was that, far from giving way on some points, he ought to strengthen every measure that might force England to make an earlier peace. He thought it better to suffer severely at the moment than to suffer over a long time. Since the English tried by every measure to evade the prohibition of imports, in order to support their industries and

¹ The decree of the Senate, dated December 13, 1810, in addition to regularizing the annexation of Holland, had joined with France the Hanseatic towns and a large strip of territory extending as far as Lubeck. These annexations had been divided into ten French *départements*.

uphold their credit, it was for him to do all he could to triumph over their cunning and force his enemy to yield. "It is a battle of giants," he went on to say. "The seaport merchants are caught between the two champions. How could anyone help being jostled in the fight? But this fight to the death is in the interests even of the men who grumble. They will be the first to gather the fruits. The English have driven me, forced me, to every step I have taken. If they had not broken the Treaty of Amiens, if they had made peace after Austerlitz, or after Tilsit, I would have stayed quietly at home. Fear for the capital of my commerce would have kept me in check. I should have undertaken nothing outside France, for it would not have been to my advantage. I should have grown rusty and easy-going. Nothing could be more delightful. I am no enemy to the pleasures of life. I am no Don Quixote, with a craving for adventures. I am a reasonable being, who does no more than he thinks will profit him. The only difference between me and other rulers is that difficulties bring them to a stop, but I like to overcome them whenever it is made clear to me that the end in view is a great and noble one, worthy of myself and of the people over whom I rule."

"If the English had let me," he said to me again, "I would have lived in peace. It is in their own interests alone that they have carried on the fight, and refused offers of peace; for if they had acted in the interests of Europe they would have accepted them. Holding Malta in the Mediterranean, and being in a position to protect other points necessary for the safety of their trade and the victualling of their fleet, what other claim could they advance? What further security could they want? But it is their monopoly they want to keep. They need an enormous volume of trade if their customs-houses are to pay the interest on their public debt. If the English were acting in good faith, they would not have so consistently refused to negotiate. They are afraid they would have to explain themselves, and they dare not admit their designs. If we negotiated, they would have to put their cards on the table. And then the world would see on which side was the good faith.

"It is said—and you are the first to say it, Caulaincourt—that I abuse my power. I admit it, but I do it for the good of the Continent at large. Now England thoroughly abuses her strength, the power that comes from standing isolated among the tempests. And she does so for her own good alone. The good of that Europe which seems to envelop her with goodwill counts for nothing with the merchants of London. They would sacrifice every State in Europe, even the whole world, to further one of their speculations. If their debt were not so large they might be more reasonable. It is the necessity of paying this, of maintaining their credit, that drives them on. Later on, they will certainly have to do something about that debt. Meanwhile, they sacrifice the world to it. The world will realize that in time: men's eyes will be opened, but it will be too late. If I triumph over them, Europe will bless me. If I fall, the mask of the English will fall soon after, and the world will see that they have thought of nothing but themselves: that they have sacrificed the peace of a continent to their momentary interests.

"The Continent," the Emperor said further, "could not—or should not—complain of measures that aimed at closing it, for the moment, against English trade." He told me in confidence that the annexations against which there was such an outcry were temporary measures. They were designed to inconvenience the English, to wreck their trade, to break off their trade relations. They were pledges which he held in exchange for our colonies, or those of the Dutch, or certain claims which the English must give up for the general good.

Since peace could not last, and could not secure a future for everyone, unless it was general, it was wrong, according to the Emperor, to complain of all his efforts to achieve it. Already clear-sighted people and real politicians could appreciate his aims.

The Emperor asked me several times during the journey if I thought that Russia would make peace. He added that while the Tsar Alexander was heartened by some success it would be wise of him to close the affair. I replied that I still doubted if he would negotiate so long as we were within his

territory, and that our successes would not in the least incline him towards peace.

"So you think he is very proud?"

"I think he is obstinate. And he may well be a little proud of having to some extent foreseen what has happened, and having refused to listen to any proposals while we were at Moscow."

The Emperor took up the point. "The burning of the Russian towns, the burning of Moscow, was merely stupid," he said. "Why use fire, if he relied so much on the winter? He has arms and soldiers for fighting. It is madness to spend so much money and make no use of it. One should not begin by harming oneself more than if one were beaten by the enemy. Kutusoff's retreat is utter ineptitude. It is the winter that has been our undoing. We are victims of the climate. The fine weather tricked me. If I had set out a fortnight sooner, my army would be at Witepsk;¹ and I should be laughing at the Russians and your prophet Alexander. He would be regretting that he did not negotiate. All our disasters hinge on that fortnight, and on the failure to carry out my orders for the levies of Polish Cossacks. These prophecies published after the event are nonsense. If they wanted to draw us on into the interior they should have begun by retiring and not have endangered Bagration's army by spreading their forces over a line which, being too near the frontier, had to be too long. They should not have spent so much money building card-castles along the Dwina. They should not have collected so many stores there. They have been planning from one day to the next without a settled scheme. They have never been able to fight to any purpose. But for the cowardice and stupidity of Partouneaux, the Russians would not have captured a single wagon from me at the crossing of the Beresina; and we should have cut off part of their advance-

¹ Napoleon was to return to this line of reasoning at Saint Helena. On September 29, 1817, he said to Gourgaud: "My great mistake was in staying too long in that city [Moscow]. But for that my undertaking would have been successful in the end." (Baron Gourgaud, *Sainte-Hélène, Journal inédit de 1815 à 1818*, ed. by Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, II, 337.)

guard, taken 1800 prisoners and, with an army of wretches who had nothing left but their lives, we should have won a battle against the pick of their infantry, which has fought against the Turks.¹ And in fact, when the wreck of our army was surrounded by three of theirs, what did they do? They picked off the wretches who were dying of cold or whom hunger forced to break away from their units!"

On another occasion the Emperor remarked to me that if the Russians had really intended to draw him into the interior they would not have marched to attack him at Witepsk: that they should from the beginning have harassed our flanks more: and that they should have waged only this guerilla warfare, intercepting our despatches, our smaller detachments, the officers, who came out to join us, and the raiding parties. He regarded it as a serious fault to have given battle so near to Moscow.

"Everything turned out badly," the Emperor said to me on another occasion, "because I stayed too long at Moscow. If I had left four days after I occupied it, as I thought of doing when I saw the town in flames, the Russians would have been lost. The Tsar would have been only too glad to accept the generous peace which I should then have offered from Wit-epsk. Even from Wilna, if the cold hadn't robbed me of my army, I should have dictated the terms of peace; and your precious Alexander would have signed them, if only to be rid of the military guardianship of his boyars. It was they who thrust Kutusoff upon him. And what has Kutusoff done? He endangered the army on the Moskowa, and brought about the burning of Moscow. During the retreat, when he had nothing to fight against but lifeless troops, nothing but walking ghosts, what did he attempt? He and Wittgenstein permitted the crushing of the Admiral.²

"All the other Russian Generals were worth more than that old dowager Kutusoff. Tolly³ did at least spare the army:

¹ The battle of the Beresina against Tchitchagoff.

² Admiral Tchitchagoff.

³ Barclay de Tolly, Kutusoff's predecessor in command of the main Russian army.

he did not fight with a capital at his back. Even Wittgenstein, who has just committed so many blunders through not being under the orders of Kutusoff or of the Admiral, was far superior to him. If the King of Naples does not make any foolish mistakes, if he supervises the Generals and stays at first with the vanguard so as to encourage the younger troops, who will be a little scared, things will soon be righted again. The Russians will halt, and the Cossacks will keep their distance, as soon as they see us facing up to them. If the Poles support me and the Russians don't make peace during the winter, you will see what will have happened to them by July. Everything combined to cause my failure. I was not well served in Warsaw. The Abbé de Pradt was afraid; his behaviour was self-important and paltry, instead of being that of an aristocrat. He busied himself with his own affairs, and chattered in drawing-rooms and newspapers. But in public affairs—nothing. He roused no enthusiasm in the Poles. The levies were not made; all the resources on which I should have been able to rely were lacking. Bassano bungled things in Poland as he did in Turkey and in Sweden. I was wrong to be angry with Talleyrand. The boudoir intrigues of the Duchess¹ irritated me against him; and now my affairs have miscarried. He would have given a much more definite direction to Polish effort. As it is, they have immortalized themselves in our ranks, as individuals, but they have done nothing for their country. Everyone lauded this Abbé de Pradt to me. He has intelligence, but he's a muddler."

On another occasion the Emperor said to me, speaking of the Tsar Alexander:

"He is a prince of intelligence, and well-intentioned. He is more capable than all his Ministers. If he were less distrustful of his own powers he would be better than all his Generals. He needs only decisiveness to be very capable indeed: but he is not master in his own house. He is continually hampered

¹ The Emperor referred here to the Duchess of Bassano, as is proved by a later passage. She had indeed done everything possible to prevent Talleyrand from being appointed to the Embassy at Warsaw.

by a thousand petty considerations of family, and even of individuals. Although he takes a close interest in it and gives a good deal of attention to the army, and enters perhaps more than I into questions of detail, yet he is deceived about these things. Distance, custom, the opposition of the nobility to recruiting, and the interest that ill-paid commanders have in drawing pay and rations, all combine to keep the army from being up to strength. They had been working ceaselessly for three years to bring it up to strength, and it resulted only in an actual number of men under arms smaller by half than the estimated strength on the day before the battle. You must admit you thought yourself that the army was much stronger than it was. I always thought you over-estimated them; and you wouldn't believe it. That Cossack at Ghjat was right when he said that the Russian generals valued their comfort and didn't know how to fight properly. One must do justice to the Cossacks. It is they who have achieved all the Russian successes in this campaign. They are certainly the best light troops in existence. If the Russians had different leaders their army might go far."

At various times the Emperor discussed with me the sacrifices that peace involved, and what the Russians would probably demand on behalf of the Duke of Oldenburg.¹

"They will want to re-establish him in his possessions," he said. "Alexander takes the matter very much to heart because of the Dowager Empress."

As he asked me my opinion on the point, I put it to him that I found it difficult to suppose that the Russians would not try to profit by the occasion, to the extent of obtaining the evacuation of Danzig and the other positions in the North which we had used as starting-points against them. I said that if we were obliged to abandon the Niemen, as I expected we should, their demands would surely go as far as our fortified positions on the Oder. At this the Emperor cried out in protest that he would lose all the advantages he had so far obtained against the English, when his main concern was to

¹ It will be remembered that Napoleon had taken possession of Oldenburg, by a decree of January 22, 1811.

force them to make peace; for without that there could be no lasting tranquillity. I replied that it might be possible to maintain the customs organization in the ports and along the coast without turning them into French citadels.

"And the Russians?" he asked. "What attitude will they take up with regard to England?"

"Your Majesty is in a better position to pronounce on that question than I," I replied. "But certainly you will not persuade them to put themselves in the same position that they were in before. I doubt if even the Tsar could do that."

"Then peace is impossible," the Emperor replied sharply, "if it is not to be general. One must not deceive oneself."

The conversation then turned on the situation in France and on the uneasy state of Europe, which I attributed to the invasions that had taken place. I suggested to the Emperor that a system of more modified power within more restricted limits would bind our allies to us, and even those States which would remain outside the system. I pointed out to him that, from the Duke of Gotha to the Emperor of Austria, all the Governments were frightened by the expansion of our political system, in which they saw a step towards a universal monarchy, for which the war with England seemed to them a pretext.

The Emperor listened to me attentively, joked about my moderation, and repeated to me what he had said on other occasions about his intentions and his motives. He tried to prove to me that he was far from having in view those ends with which he was credited. He was working against the English alone: since their trade had ramifications everywhere he had to pursue them everywhere. He said it was the intrigues of the English, what he called *Punica fides*, which had continually forced him to extend his sphere of operations. He spoke of his need for always maintaining a considerable army as long as the struggle with the English continued, because their Government was always working to stir up Europe against him—and so forth.

I spoke of the impression produced, even in France, by these frequent annexations of provinces and by these changes

of allies which disturbed the loyalties of the people. I told the Emperor that instead of looking on these things as advantages, people were disturbed by them, and were made anxious about the future. And I added the following reflections on these points. These amazing extensions of power were, I thought, destroying the feeling of stability and actually preventing that feeling of confidence through which institutions acquire their sanctity. Even those who flattered him felt that while his genius might make these new structures last for his lifetime, they would never last beyond it. People did not dare to tell him so, but they thought so, and this opinion was all the more strongly held for being suppressed. It was felt that he was creating great difficulties for his son. He was arming Europe in advance against the King of Rome, and even against his family: and it was a pity, when founding a new dynasty, to give room for a growing expectation of some change. No one would be able to support the burden of that colossus which the course of events and the vigour of his rule were now setting in motion. These diverse nations would never make Frenchmen; the Rhinelanders already had difficulty in persuading themselves that they had become French.

The Emperor admitted with absolute frankness the justice of my remarks. He did, however, rebut several of them:

"I shall create institutions," he said, "to strengthen the organization I have set up. No one can foretell what sacrifices I might not make—and even gladly—to secure such a state of affairs in Europe as would guarantee a lasting peace to all people, as would guarantee to the French, and to the Germans, domestic prosperity such as the English enjoy. They are a worthy people, the Germans," he added. "They must be repaid for the sacrifices they have made. I do not cling to Hamburg, or to any other particular place. I am not one of those narrow-minded men who see things from only one point of view and are obstinate on a question. There will be many ways of arranging things as soon as the English make up their minds to peace, and agree to concede to others those rights and privileges which Heaven never created for them alone.

We can make peace with the English only so long as we have compensations to offer them, because among them the Ministry have a responsibility about which we must be able to make them easy. They can only take such a decision as making peace with France if they can say to the nation: 'We have made such a sacrifice for such a motive; but here are compensations made to us, and advantages gained.' There is a delicate and difficult relationship between the country and the Ministry, and still more so, therefore, between the Ministry and myself. Without this English peace, however, all others are merely truces. The English are playing for too high stakes to give way lightly. They know very well that I shall take advantage of a peace to establish a navy, and I should not again allow ourselves to be robbed of our commercial capital during a state of peace. They know that a navy in my hands could do them considerable damage. If they were sure I should live only three or four years more they would make peace to-morrow; for the difficulty of the question lies in the navy that I shall have, that I shall build up within a few years."

He added further that he had greater need of peace than anyone, and frankly desired it. How could anyone doubt that? He did not live under canvas for his own pleasure. It was the English who would not decide upon peace and who, according to him, might not be in a position to decide upon it, being afraid of the future. The English Ministry contained clever men who could not have overlooked any of the major considerations of which he spoke. He was well aware that the institutions of France were incomplete. He did not disguise from himself that only peace would put him in a position to give them their full development. And who could doubt that he desired peace, when only peace could consolidate this achievement? With regard to the institutions, he put in the forefront the Senate, which had by no means the independence it must have if it were to command such high respect that it could influence the opinion of the country. He told me that he would raise it to the status of a Chamber of Peers.

The Emperor pointed out that the failure of this campaign was an obstacle to everything. There had to be a buffer state

as an outpost against irruptions from the North, and to exercise a moderating influence on the ambitions of other Powers. Europe owed its misfortunes to the weakness of the Bourbons in allowing a partition of Poland. The Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia fully realized the mistake that had been made. They had, quite openly, entered the war against Russia solely because they were the people most interested in the creation of this barrier. The Austrians expected through these arrangements to obtain a redistribution of territory which would give them necessary outlets for their trade. The King of Prussia flattered himself perhaps that the new state would come under his rule.

The Emperor added further that the silence maintained by the Russians towards the Austrians when the latter attempted mediation, before the opening of the campaign, had left the Emperor Francis in no doubt as to the ambitious intentions of the Tsar Alexander. Francis had told him so several times at Dresden. The Russian Government snatched with both hands, from friends as much as from enemies. Everything seemed desirable to them. After Tilsit they had profited at the expense of their allies the Prussians; after the war against Austria they had accepted a portion of Galicia. No delicate scruples ever hindered the Tsar from rounding off his territory.

The Emperor put forward the reflection that the Tsar, with his gentle methods and air of moderation, had done more for the interests of Russia than the ambitious Catherine whom they idolized: and that Finland was of far greater importance to an Empire whose capital was at Petersburg than the uninhabited Crimea and all Catherine had conquered from the Turks.

The Emperor kept reverting to the idea that the Austrians desired the restoration of Poland, and that they were by no means set on retaining what remained to them of Galicia, adding that at the Peace of Vienna,¹ they would gladly have surrendered their millions of Galicians for a part of Illyria, no matter what, or for a few fragments of territory on the Inn. This arrangement could be made, therefore, whenever he

¹ October 14, 1809.

wished.¹ His father-in-law had urged it upon him at Dresden, and indeed had probably come there in the hope of concluding the matter. He, however, had wished to be sure of the attitude of the Lithuanians, and to see for himself whether the Poles were capable of becoming and remaining an independent country. It resulted from this policy that he had not yet set all the Poles free, and events were proving him right. He would soon be able to see whether they were as worthy of independence nationally as they were as individuals; for adversity steels a gallant spirit more than prosperity. He intended to speak to that effect at Warsaw. He would tell the Poles all our misfortunes, and even all the dangers in which they stood. But he would tell them also all that he hoped for, if they as a nation would second him.

I pointed out to the Emperor that the lack of unity and zeal of which he complained on the part of the Poles was surely due to his leaving them in too great uncertainty about their future: that in practice there was no limit to the sacrifices asked of them: that the unfortunate Duchy, furnishing supplies for everything over a long period, seemed to be exhausted, even the richest having no longer two guineas to rub together. I reminded him that I had always appreciated the advantages of this restoration, as forming a buffer state, and held that this motive was sufficient, as I had had the honour of telling him in other circumstances, to justify the war against Russia. But for several years, like many others, and like some even among the Poles (although they did not dare to explain their views on the point to him as frankly as I had done), in his references to Poland and in the measures he had taken with the declared object of arriving at that goal, I had seen only a method of arriving, through that, at a different goal. In fact, Poland had become a military and political stepping-stone.

Moreover, I pointed out to him smilingly that everything he told me about his conversations at Dresden with the Emperor Francis, about his refusal to give up Illyria to the

¹ This was precisely the prize promised to the Austrians in the Treaty of Paris, March 14, 1812, as compensation for Galicia in the event of the restoration of Poland.

Austrians, and indeed about all that had passed between M. de Bassano and M. de Metternich, showed me that he wanted to hold over Austria his power of giving or refusing, according to circumstances, and that he wished to be always able to make use of the Poles, stimulating them with hopes but not giving any undertakings so definite as to inconvenience his further plans or prevent him from adapting his course of action to future events. I added that when Poland was once restored, the Poles would show scant eagerness to supply us with tools to fight in Spain. In fact it was perfectly plain that if he had been really guided by those broad European considerations that demand a buffer State, he would have at once indemnified the Austrians for the loss of their Polish interests and proclaimed the restoration of Poland.

The Emperor replied with a smile: "You make the same political calculations as the English," and added sharply: "But how was I to make peace with the Russians if they would not cede Lithuania? I could not bind myself to be at war all my life for this object. I certainly did want a restored Poland, but not a Poland whose king would tremble before the Russians and after a couple of years put himself under their protection. Under an elected king, the State could not maintain itself. It would be out of tune with the rest of Europe. Under an hereditary monarch the jealousy of the great houses would again have brought its dismemberment. Do you suppose, for instance, that the Lithuanians would have reconciled themselves to a Poniatowski? The condition of the Court at Petersburg, and the protection of the ruler of a great Empire, would always have suited them far better than the petty court of Mme Tyszkiewicz at Warsaw.¹ Poland must be made into a powerful State by the addition of further provinces. It must have Danzig, and a coast-line, so that the

¹ Constance Poniatowski, niece of King Stanislas, was born on March 2, 1759, and on April 4, 1775, married Count Louis Tyszkiewicz, Grand Marshal of Lithuania. She died in 1830, and was the mother of Anna, who was first the Countess Potocka and then Countess Wonsowicz. Anna lived from 1776 to 1867, and was the author of the *Mémoires de la Comtesse Potocka*, which were edited by Casimir Strylenski.

country may have an outlet for its produce. And it must have a foreign king. A Pole would create too much jealousy. To name this king in advance would have cooled the zeal of the Poles, for they are none too sure themselves what they want. The Czartoriskis, the Poniatowskis, the Potockis, and a host of others, are full of pretensions. Murat would have suited them, but he has so little sense! Jerome, of whom I had thought, has no other quality but vanity: I've had nothing but blunders from him. He left the army because he would not serve under Davout, as though he did not owe his throne to the battle of Auerstädt. His behaviour in the Duchy when he passed through was regrettable.¹ My family have never seconded me well. My brothers are as full of pretensions as though they could say, 'The King, our father. . . .'

Breaking off suddenly, the Emperor asked me:

"Whom would you have made king?"

I replied that as I had never made any kings I could not proclaim my intentions quite so suddenly.

The Emperor laughed and said the choice was very difficult. I replied that I thought, even more definitely than he, that to establish his own dynasty on that throne would create yet another cause of anxiety in Europe; that it seemed to me very difficult even to hope for such a thing in the present state of affairs; that in any circumstances a member of his family on the throne of Poland would have been yet another obstacle to peace with the English, although in itself the creation of this buffer state would have suited their policy.

"In that regard you are quite right," the Emperor said.

The conversation gradually turned to past events, to Prussia and the Peace of Tilsit. I told the Emperor that instead of destroying Prussia it seemed to me he should have reconstructed it—even perhaps under the name of the Kingdom of Poland, if he thought it useful to revive that Power. I said that he had there broken down the very buffer state which it was so useful to have in the centre of Europe; and that in his place I should have generously pardoned the

¹ On Jerome's journey through Poland at the opening of the campaign, see Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et sa famille*. VII, 297.

Prussians, and reorganized their power on a larger scale and without the intervention of the Russians, in order to bring them within my system of alliances, a thing which must certainly have happened as a result of making Prussia Polish.

"The policy of the Prussians has always been so tortuous," said the Emperor, "and they have always shown such bad faith towards everyone and have been so clumsy, that no Government was genuinely interested in them. I hesitated for a moment whether to declare that the house of Brandenburg should no longer reign; but I had used the Prussians so severely that some consolation had to be left to them. And then Alexander took so much interest in that family that I yielded to his representations. I made a serious mistake, for the power I preserved to the King will not let him forget the power he has lost."

I replied that to change the ruling house, if he mistrusted it, was undoubtedly preferable to depriving Europe of a State whose power would continue indispensable even if he insisted on taking that power out of the hands of the house of Brandenburg. The Emperor answered that it would have been difficult to make the Tsar Alexander take that view, though more on account of the king than on account of the country; and at that time his main and absolutely necessary object had been to close the Continent against the English. It was to achieve this that he had made the concession.

The Emperor then complained of his brothers. I pointed out that it was difficult not to desire a complete independence from the moment that one became a king; and that moreover it was often necessary for their popularity in their own countries that they should resist the Emperor's demands. As my frankness did not seem unpalatable, I said that his intention was indeed to create kingdoms, but that in fact he only allotted them extended prefectures in place of independent states; and that, his kings being mere pro-consuls, their position did not match with their title and the condition of their affairs. The Emperor smiled as though he found my remarks correct.

Probably the conversation did not displease him, as he

reverted to it five or six times during the journey, and I needed no urging to repeat the same views. The Emperor nearly always tried to bring me to his own opinion. He brought to the endeavour patience and detailed care, discussing and reasoning as though I were some foreign Power whom it would be to his advantage to persuade. Though his reasoning brought me to share his view on one or two points, in the main I held my own. I noticed that he passed lightly over points which he did not wish to explain. Then if I came back to them he would say:

"You see things as a young man; you don't understand."

He also said at times, when my plea exceeded his patience:

"You don't understand anything about public affairs."

Often he would not agree that things were as I represented them. In answer to the remarks which most directly attacked his ambition and his passion for war, he smiled, joked, and tried to get hold of my ear and pinch it, an action which my fur bonnet made difficult. He gave several friendly taps on the neck, and would say jokingly:

"They're wrong! I'm not ambitious. Long nights, fatigue, war—I'm too old for all that. I like my bed and my rest as well as anyone; but I want to finish my work. In this world one must either command or obey. The attitude of all the Governments towards the French showed me that they could count on nothing but their own power: which means, on force. So I've been obliged to make them powerful, and to maintain large armies. I did not go and pick a quarrel with the Austrians when they were alarmed about the fate of England and forced me to leave Boulogne to fight the Battle of Austerlitz. I did not threaten the Prussians when they forced me to go and dethrone them at Jena. But in any case, what is this power they talk about? Nothing! The power of the whole Continent is nothing so long as the flag does not protect trade. The passports of the Duke of Gotha are respected at Paris as they are at Weimar, but the Austrians cannot send out a felucca loaded with Hungarian wine without the permission of the Court of St. James's."

The Emperor also said to me: "I have more foresight than

the other rulers. I want to take advantage of this opportunity to wind up the old quarrel between England and the Continent. Similar circumstances will never occur again. What seems to offend no one but me to-day will offend the other rulers before long. Emotion and habits of thought are against me. The Governments are blinded by prejudice and favouritism. After a few years of a bad peace the nations and their rulers would realize what they lacked. I am the only one who can see it now because the others are determined to shut their eyes to it. The power of the English, as it is at present, rests only upon the monopoly they exercise over other nations, and can be maintained only by that. Why should they alone reap the benefits which millions of others could reap as well? The proof that they exploit for themselves what should belong to others lies in the fact that they live only by their customs-houses, by their trading, and that their population cannot consume all that pays tax to them. Why should what others consume pay dues to London? If I were so weak as to give way on certain points in order to make a bad peace, the Continent would blame me for it within four years. It would be too late to change it. All our wealth would be at sea, and the English would take advantage of the truce to fill their coffers and get their breath, and confiscate it all for a mere hint of dissatisfaction—until, that is, the protests of the traders had roused some of these Governments. Then ten years of war, of trouble and misfortune, with three or four coalitions formed and broken up, might not take us even so far as the point we have reached to-day. But posterity sums up without favour and will judge between Rome and Carthage. The verdict will be for the French. They are fighting now, whatever the world may say, only for the general good. It is therefore just that the flags of the Continent should stand in line with ours. The French are fighting for the most sacred rights of nations: the English are only defending their self-assumed privileges."

Returning later to this subject, the Emperor remarked to me that the more he studied the government of England the more innately vigorous it seemed to him. It had all the

advantages possible to an oligarchy. It was strong in wealth and influence; it ruled the country with the support of the public opinion which it created itself through its many dependants. He considered, moreover, that it drew added force even from the opposition—which, according to him, grew weaker every day because it only served to show the strength of its adversaries. According to the Emperor, the ranks of the opposition would be still further thinned; for men starting on a career would for their own advantage take the side of power, which is also the side of fortune. He was of opinion that if the war continued the English, within two years, would fall into a kind of bankruptcy, by reducing the rates of interest. And if peace were made this bankruptcy would fall within ten years, unless the new conditions which would follow on the great changes now about to take place in the New World should offer them an enormous outlet for their trade.

"In English affairs," he said, "everything depends on an imaginary factor. Their credit rests upon confidence, since they have nothing on which to secure it; although I admit the Government has something even better, since all individual fortunes are wrapped up with those of the State. The system of continual borrowing, which continually links the present with the past, does in some degree compel confidence in the future. By involving everyone's fortunes in the fortunes of the State the Government have gained something better than the actual security they lacked; for by that means they have created an unlimited security in the shape of individual self-interest. That," the Emperor added emphatically, "is why we must have patience. The time is not far off when the Ministry will not be able to raise loans so easily, or at least they will not be so large. Then they will not be able to grant their subsidies, which have a great influence on the Continent. For, apart from France, the States of the Continent possess nothing but worthless paper; only at London and Paris is there any money or any credit. At the moment, English affairs are at a crisis. Trade is damaged. Doubtless the Russians, by opening their ports to them, are delaying the effect of the depression, but since the cause continues the evil

hour is only postponed. The English have, it is true, considerable resources yet; but since with them everything depends upon confidence, the least thing may paralyse, endanger, and even destroy their whole system, in spite of the fact that there are among them some very capable men and citizens moved by a true love of their country."

The Emperor returned continually to the subject of England, which occupied his mind above everything else, and during one of our conversations he said to me:

"The people of Europe are blind to their real dangers. They pay heed to nothing but their inconvenience on account of the war at sea. One might think that all the politics and all the interests of this unhappy Continent are bounded by the price of a cask of sugar. It is pitiable: yet that is how things stand. They protest only against the French, and refuse to see anything but the French armies: as though the English also were not present on every side, and present much more threateningly. Are not Heligoland, Gibraltar, Tarifa and Malta, English citadels? Do they not threaten the trade of all the Powers much more than Danzig threatens the trade of Russia? Yet if I gave the people of Europe their head, they would deliver themselves into the hands of the English. Next day they would give Corfu to the English. Yes, and Madeira—just as they have already given them the Cape. Yet from the rocks of Malta the English already control Turkey, and consequently the Black Sea and Russia also. At Gibraltar, they hold the entrance to the Mediterranean. If they could seize Corfu they would have a foothold in Greece, and be masters even of the gulf.¹ The situation leaps to the eye, yet the Austrians will not, any more than the Russians, admit the dangers that threaten them. Jealousy of France is stronger than reason. They refuse to exercise any foresight. But for me, the European Governments would grant the English to-morrow the supremacy they desire. When all trade protection is subject to the whims of the London Government—when we are forced to eat sugar of their selling only, and to wear stockings and clothes of their making—then

¹ The Adriatic.

Petersburg, Vienna and Berlin will grasp the fact of the English monopoly. Until then they will shut their eyes to it, for fear of recognizing that I am defending the interests of all of us alike. The fact is plain to people of goodwill. But where is there any goodwill? The blindness of European politics is pitiable."

The same trend of conversation led us on another occasion to discuss the outlets that the English had secured for their trade; and the outlets they were seeking, and would secure, in the Spanish colonies, and finally the war in the Peninsula.

"Doubtless it would have been better," the Emperor said to me, "to have wound up the war in Spain before embarking on this Russian expedition—though there is much room for discussion on the point. As for the war in Spain itself, it is now a matter only of guerrilla contests. On the day the English are driven out of the Peninsula, there will be nothing left of the war but isolated bodies of rebels, and one cannot hope to clear a country of these in a month or two.

"Since the opposition to the new regime comes from the lower classes, only time and the conduct of the upper classes—assisted by a strong and cautious Government which has the support of a national *gendarmerie* and, at the same time, of the presence of some French troops—will calm the storm. Their hatred will wear out when they see that all we bring them is a better law, more liberal, and better suited to the times in which we live than the ancient customs and the Inquisition by which the country used to be governed. At present the Spaniards are fighting because they still believe that we want to make Frenchmen of them. Everything will settle down as soon as we can persuade them that it is to our interests that they should continue to be Spaniards. But for the disasters in Russia the time would be drawing near when the French troops would not need to occupy more than a few fortified points in certain provinces. If the peasants saw no more French troops about the countryside, if they were governed only by their own governors and controlled only by Spanish police, confidence would be established, and this would lead to a spread of peace and conciliation."

According to the Emperor the presence of the English Army was the greatest obstacle to the pacification of Spain, but he would rather see it in that country than be threatened with it at any moment—in Brittany or Italy, or anywhere, in fact, where the coast was accessible. As it was, he knew where to look for the English; while if they were not occupied there he would be forced to prepare for them, and hold himself ready for defence against them, at every point. And that would use up many more troops, give him much more anxiety, and possibly do him much more damage.

"If 30,000 English landed in Belgium," he said to me, "or in the Pas-de-Calais, and requisitioned supplies from three hundred villages—if they were to go and burn the château of Caulaincourt—they would do us much more harm than by forcing me to maintain an army in Spain. You would make a much worse outcry, my good Master of the Horse! You would complain much more loudly than you do when you say that I am at universal monarchy! The English are playing into my hands. If the Ministry were in my pay they could not act in a way more favourable to me. You must take good care not to repeat the ideas I express to you; for if the idea entered their heads to make expeditions against my coasts, now at one point and now at another: to re-embark as soon as forces were collected to fight them, and go at once to threaten some other point—the situation would be insupportable.

"As it is," he added, "the war in Spain costs me no more than any other war, or any other compulsory defence against the English. So long as peace is not made with that Power, there is not much difference in cost between the present state of affairs in Spain and an ordinary state of war with England. In view of the great length of Spain's coast-line, with the situation as it is at present we must limit ourselves to keeping the English under observation—unless, indeed, they should march into the interior and a highly favourable opportunity arise for giving battle; for if we forced them to re-embark at one point, since they would always be sure of finding auxiliaries, they would disembark again at another. The Marshals and Generals who have been left to look after themselves in

Spain might have done better, but they will not come to an agreement. There has never been any unity in their operations. They detest each other to such an extent that they would be in despair if one thought he had made a movement that might yield credit to another. Accordingly there is nothing to be done except hold the country and try to pacify it until I can myself put some vigour into the operations there. Soult has ability: but no one will take orders. Every General wants to be independent, so as to play the viceroy in his own province. In Wellington," he added, "my Generals have encountered an opponent superior to some of them. Moreover, they have made the mistakes of a schoolboy. Marmont shows a really high quality of judgment and logic in discussing war, but is not even moderately able in action. In fact, our momentary reverses in that war, which delight the city of London, have little effect on the general course of affairs—and cannot indeed have any real importance, as I can change the face of affairs when I please.

"Events at present," he said, "are giving Wellington a reputation; but in war men may lose in a day what they have spent years in building up. As to the outlet for English trade which the war has created in the Spanish colonies, I admit that is certainly unfortunate as within two years those outlets may counterbalance our prohibition of imports on the Continent."

The Emperor saw, in the separation of these colonies from their metropolis,¹ an important point which would change the politics of the world, which would give new strength to America, and in less than ten years would threaten the power of the English—which would be a compensation. He did not question that Mexico, and all the major Spanish possessions overseas, would declare their independence² and form one or

¹ Mexico in September 1810, Venezuela, New Granada, Chile, and the Argentine in 1810 or 1811, had all gone into more or less open revolt against the dominion of Spain. Paraguay had declared, its independence in 1811.

² *The independence of Mexico was proclaimed on February 21, 1821, by the President, Yturbe. Chile had already achieved its freedom on January 1, 1818, Bolivia on August 10, 1819, etc.*

two States under a form of government which would force them, in their own interests, to become auxiliaries of the United States.

"It marks a new era," he said. "It will lead to the independence of all other colonies."

The changes that would arise from this development he regarded as the most important of the century, since they would alter the balance of commercial interests and, in consequence, alter the policy of the different Governments.

"All the colonies," he said, "will imitate the United States. The colonials grow tired of obeying a Government which seems foreign to them because it subordinates them to its own local interests, interests which it cannot sacrifice to theirs. As soon as they feel strong enough to resist, the colonies want to shake off the yoke of those who created them. One's country is where one lives; a man does not take long to forget that he or his father was born under another sky. Ambition achieves what self-interest has begun. They want to have a standing of their own and then the yoke is soon thrown off."

I spoke to the Emperor of the moral effect which the resistance of the Spanish nation was having on people in general, suggesting to him that he was mistaken in attaching no importance to the example they were setting. I reminded him of the remark of the Tsar Alexander, which had struck me and which I had repeated to him on my return: "You have beaten the Spanish armies but you have not subdued the nation. The nation will raise other armies. The Spaniards, without any government, are setting a noble example to other nations. They are teaching the sovereigns what can be accomplished by perseverance in a just cause."

The Emperor treated as a joke what he called "the utterances of the prophet of the North." He added, however:

"Although he made many mistakes—or, at least, allowed his generals to make them—the Tsar Alexander is the only one (among the rulers) who has shown good judgment, and made a sound estimate of his position and of the course of events. That prince has more intelligence than men think:

and he has good judgment. His misfortune lies in being so poorly seconded."

Returning to affairs in Spain, the Emperor said:

"It is easy to pronounce judgment upon what is past: and easy to exalt as heroism what depends upon causes that are in truth hardly honourable. The heroism with which, in their hatred of France, they now credit the Spaniards arises simply out of the barbarous condition of that half-savage population and out of the superstitions to which the mistakes of our Generals have given new vigour. It is out of laziness, not out of heroism, that the Spanish peasants prefer the dangerous life of a smuggler or of a highwayman to the labours of cultivating the soil. The Spanish peasants have seized the opportunity of taking up this nomadic, smuggler's existence which is so suited to their taste and so much to the advantage of their poverty-stricken condition. There is nothing patriotic about that."

The Emperor cited, in support of his dictum, that armies of 50,000 Spaniards gave ground and took to flight before much smaller forces, because the Spaniards would only go into danger where there was hope of booty.

"The Romans and the Spartans," he added, "had other aims. They faced death for other motives. The land of their fathers meant something to them; but the wretched Spaniards are only moved by the attractions of booty. Anything is better than the miserable existence he leads in his own village. It is nothing but bias that has pompously ascribed nobility to a course of action whose objects have never been honourable, although the result may be useful at the moment to the cause they think the Spaniards are defending. The Spaniard of to-day is still the same as in the time of the Romans: like a savage, he hates the foreigner—or, rather, whatever is unfamiliar to him. He hates anything that tends to bring him out of his condition of barbarism. The Spanish peasantry have even less share in the civilization of Europe than the Russians.

"It is true," he went on, "that the proximity of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain to my own dynasty, which sits on the

throne of Louis XVI, seemed to me a state of affairs which was likely to prove inconvenient. I often discussed it with Talleyrand, as I did so many other questions which are involved in the broader interests of the world. For a long time, however, I did not think it very important for the affairs of the moment because it seemed to me so clear that the obstinate stupidity of the King, controlled as he was by Godoy, the Prince of the Peace, would keep the country from any development that might cause me anxiety. Accordingly I had no other intention than to make Spain useful to me against the English. The weakness of the King—combined with the interests of his favourite, who would wish, I thought, not to be in bad odour with the French—suited my policy too well for me to have any thought of other arrangements; when suddenly, roused no doubt by the mutterings of Castilian pride which had been wounded by some proposal, or by some clumsiness on the part of our diplomatic representatives, the King thought the moment favourable to regain the respect of the Spaniards by calling them out against me to whom he was thought to have sold himself. The fool! At the moment when his favour was disappearing in a general outcry against him, he thought to save himself by rousing the nation in the very direction of its discontent; and in trying to save himself he lost Spain. And Murat, in his turn, lost Spain for me by trying to save the favourite. For in the rebellion of Madrid the nation was angry only against Godoy;¹ they only looked upon us as enemies because Murat tried to save him and by this tactlessness gave the nation ground for believing what ill-will whispered against us: that we were partners with Godoy, or he with us."

¹ A preliminary rebellion broke out at Aranjuez on the night of March 17-18, 1808. On the 19th Godoy was overthrown and Charles IV abdicated in favour of his son Ferdinand. Then, on the 21st, he went back on his abdication. Murat, having entered Madrid on the 23rd, delayed his recognition of Ferdinand. On May 2, 1808, a general insurrection broke out at Madrid following on the news that the last members of the Royal Family had left for Bayonne. It was vigorously suppressed by Murat. "The 2nd May destroyed beyond repair the strength of Ferdinand's party." (*La Forest to Champagny, from Madrid, May 11, 1808, Correspondance du Comte de la Forest, I, 7.*)

The Emperor discussed Godoy's insolent proclamation to the Spaniards—the proclamation of October 3, 1806.¹

"The behaviour of the favourite," he said to me, "seemed a little suspicious even before Jena. It would have seemed thoroughly suspicious if my ambassador had been a capable man and had kept me informed of what was happening in Spain; but I was not well served.² At that time I was amazed to receive an unaccustomed resistance from that Government; and I was on my guard. This change of policy even made me wish to arrange the differences which had arisen with Prussia, although otherwise I should have made haste to pick up the gauntlet which the Prussian Court threw down at such an ill-judged moment. I could see there was some discontent among the Spaniards but I thought only their vanity was wounded, which I could have soothed at a later date; and I confess I was a long way from thinking that I should receive a declaration of war from the favourite. I thought him better advised."

The Emperor added that he had been amazed at receiving, after Jena, this strange proclamation, by which he was not misled for a moment. He added: "Not being able to disguise from myself the intentions of this new enemy, I disguised from him my attitude, although the successes I had just gained stood me in as good stead as I could have wished, and although, being more subtle in politics than Godoy, I had myself provided him, for the moment, with the means to explain everything to me so as to think me satisfied, promising myself to

¹ In this proclamation Godoy, the Prince of the Peace, summoned the Spaniards to arms without, however, telling them what enemy threatened them. Cf. Geoffrey de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, Paris, 1908, I, 67.

² The French Ambassador in Spain at the time of these incidents was François, Marquis de la Ferté-Beauharnais (1756-1846), the brother-in-law of Josephine, who had replaced General de Beurnonville. His own successor was the Comte de la Forest. Between the departure of de Beurnonville, May 27, 1806, and the arrival of Beauharnais, December 23, 1806, the Embassy at Madrid had been managed by Denis-Simon Carvillon de Vandeul (1775-1850), the grandson of Diderot of whose casualness Napoleon complained again and again.

take a startling revenge upon him at the first opportunity, or at the least, to put the Spanish Court in such a position that it could not prove an embarrassment to me on any future occasion."¹

"This behaviour opened my eyes," the Emperor remarked to me more than once; and he added, "the Prince of the Peace might have caused me some grey hairs on the day before Jena, but on the day after, I was master of the situation. For a moment I thought the Spaniards were more decided than they seemed and that my ambassador was their dupe; but that anxiety didn't last. Godoy was more fatal to Spain by the one occasion when he showed some energy than by all the dishonourable flaccidity to which for years he had reduced his master in the public eye. He did not stop to realize that when a man in his position draws his sword against a sovereign ruler, he must conquer or die; for though kings may forgive each other their injuries, they have not and should not have the same indulgence towards subjects. He should have seen that there could be no possible pardon for a man, who, like him, had no roots in the land; neither reason nor policy would allow of it. He made a sacrifice of Spain in order to continue the favourite; and the Spanish sacrificed themselves in order to be revenged on him and on those whom they wrongly believed were his supporters. In a state of revolution rumour and popular hatred can strike roots. Once the first gun is fired, there are no more explanations; passions rise and men who cannot agree kill each other."

The Emperor repeated that the attitude of the Spaniards had almost decided him to make peace at Berlin, and even to give generous terms to the Prussians. He added that if the officer who brought word of the surrender of Magdeburg had arrived an hour later, peace would have been signed.²

¹ Cf. Gcoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 67.

² The allusion is to the negotiations that Zastrow and Luchesini opened with Duroc at Berlin in November 1806. Cf. Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, VII, 109. Magdeburg surrendered to Ney under the threat of bombardment, on November 8, 1806.

Returning to the subject of Spain, the Emperor told me that when Godoy saw that the Emperor had overcome the Prussians he did all that he could to take him in about his famous proclamation. He pretended, the Emperor added jokingly, that it was directed against the King of Morocco or the Grand Turk.

"We took each other in all the more easily," he went on, "because it was equally useful to each of us to be deceived by the other. Finding me disposed to rival his master in making him a fine fortune, he seconded all my plans. I had no thought of overthrowing Charles IV. I was anxious only to make certain, for as long as the war with the English lasted, of the security I needed in order to carry out measures that would force them to make peace. Isquierdo was Godoy's spy at Paris, and the channel for a direct correspondence between Charles IV and myself. As the favourite's confidant, he was very intimate with Talleyrand and Murat. The negotiations were for the most part carried on without the knowledge of the Spanish Government or the Spanish Ambassador.¹ On our side, Champagny took no open part in them. He was useful to me, however; he is a sound man, zealous, and devoted to me. The King was very pleased to enrich himself out of the spoils of Portugal; and his favourite was delighted to protect himself from Ferdinand's resentment, when the King should die, by creating an independent State for himself.³ Despised by the nation, envied by the great nobles, having no support but the favour of the King and Queen, which he might lose at any moment, he agreed to everything I wanted.

¹ The Spanish Ambassador at Paris had been, since 1805, Charles Fieschi, Prince of Masserano. He was afterwards Grand Master of the Ceremonies to King Joseph. After 1814 he went to live at Paris and died there in 1837.

² Champagny was at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs.

³ By the Treaty of Fontainebleau, October 27, 1807, Portugal had been divided between the Queen of Etruria, for whom was created the kingdom of Lusitania, and the Prince of the Peace. Napoleon had reserved the centre of Portugal to himself, to be disposed of when peace should be declared.

"Murat and Talleyrand were the confidants of his hopes and fears—above all, the latter. His ambition persuaded him, because at the moment it was to my advantage to further his interests, that I had forgotten his past conduct. In his blindness he forgot that he had issued his proclamation only because he thought I was beaten. Once you've behaved like a knave, you must never behave like a fool. Frias,¹ whom the Prince of the Peace sent to Paris at the time to justify his actions and to bring me, together with the congratulations of the King upon my successes,² his excuses and regrets for what had occurred, was only there for form's sake: Isquierdo alone held the secrets of the affair. They did not realize at Madrid that the double purpose of Frias's mission robbed his congratulations of all worth by dressing them in the livery of Confusion and Fear. I showed nothing (of my feeling), however, because I was concerned before anything else with getting adopted in Spain and Portugal the measures agreed upon at Tilsit for the extension of the Continental System. Being in an awkward position with regard to me, the Madrid Government thought they could put everything right by being eager in adopting the system. It was more difficult to impose it on the Portuguese, a nation completely under English influence. If they refused they would have to be forced, and for that it was necessary to act in unison with the Spaniards.

"In this state of affairs it was necessary for the safety of the troops I should send into Portugal (and so necessary for the Continental System) that I should occupy one or two points in Spain. For I could not rely on Godoy. I knew that, long before, he had sold himself to the English and had already considerable investments in that country. Murat had without

¹ Don Diego Fernandez de Velasco Lopez Pacheco y Giron, Marquis of Belmonte, thirteenth Duke of Frias, Chamberlain to Charles IV, and a Lieutenant-General. He was major-domo to Joseph and later (in 1808) Ambassador to Paris, where he died in February, 1811.

² Frias had been sent to Paris to bear congratulations to the Emperor after the Peace of Tilsit. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 92.

doubt obtained the upper hand over the enemies of France, but he had not destroyed them.

"The favourite had such influence over the King that, since I could not hope to disabuse the credulous old man, I had to negotiate with Godoy to achieve the exclusion of the English from the whole of the European coast-line. As the Court of Lisbon would not submit to the plan, the Observation Corps of the Gironde, which had been formed, ostensibly, for the purpose of protecting our coasts and preventing smuggling, was mobilized.¹ The despatch of Junot into Spain demanded, in the interests of the Spanish themselves, some definite agreements. Duroc signed the treaty that Talleyrand had negotiated with Isquierdo. It gave to Spain, to the King of Etruria and the Prince of the Peace one-half of Portugal, and kept the other half in reserve as a means of making peace with the English, which was always the main end I had in view. The Spanish troops were to act with us in Portugal and to guard the coasts,² while La Romana³ and O'Farril⁴ were to operate with other Spanish in the north and in Tuscany, in order to demonstrate, in the eyes of Europe, our perfect agreement. The Austrians were well disposed towards us.⁵ The English could therefore deceive themselves no longer. They were at

¹ In October 1807, Napoleon concentrated at Bayonne the troops composing the 1st Observation Corps of the Gironde (under Junot) and the 2nd Corps (under Dupont). On October 12th, the former received the order to advance into Spain, which he did on the 17th.

² The Treaty of Fontainebleau had put at Napoleon's disposal three Spanish divisions, which were to invade the province of Oporto, march upon Lisbon, and occupy the Algarves.

³ Pedro Caro y Sureda, third Marquess of La Romana (1761-1811), was in command of the Spanish troops which were despatched to join the main army in 1808 in fulfilment of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. They were quartered at Hamburg, and in Jutland.

⁴ Don Gonzalo O'Farril (1753-1831), born in Cuba, was first Ambassador to Berlin, and then commanded the Spanish troops in Etruria. He was afterwards Minister for War to Joseph.

⁵ The Austrians had just signed the Convention of Fontainebleau, on October 10, 1807.

last to see their trade refused in all quarters and the whole of Europe working as their enemies. This time everything worked together for the success of my plans and my main object seemed to be attained. The secret of these negotiations was so well kept, and the military preparations so well carried out, that even at Madrid they suspected nothing. The ambitious Prince of the Peace, concerned only with securing his principality in Portugal, made Charles IV agree to everything.

"The Spanish certainly stood to gain by the arrangement. The elderly King was delighted at conquering Portugal and becoming an Emperor: he thought that this title would make a great man of him, as if the new title would be sweeter to his subjects than the old, and to call himself Emperor would give him the genius and the energy to restore and defend his great possessions.¹ Each of us, in fact, thought he had done something useful because it was something that would satisfy Spanish pomposity: but we were wrong. During the negotiations at Fontainebleau, Ferdinand, who was in a hurry to occupy the throne, was plotting against his father. Looking for some support, he thought to secure it by writing and asking me to give him in marriage some relative of Josephine.² To explain his request, made without his father's knowledge, he put forward the excuse that his father wanted to make him brother-in-law to the favourite.³ The obscurity of this move,

¹ By the Treaty of Fontainebleau, Charles IV received the title of Emperor of the Americas and King of All the Spains, with the style of "His Imperial and Royal Majesty."

² His letter of October 11, 1807. Although in his letter Ferdinand states that he waits upon "The Emperor's sole choice in respect of a bride," he had thought of Stéphanie Tascher de la Pagerie, afterwards Duchess of Arenberg. Napoleon thought for a moment of marrying this prince to the eldest daughter of Lucien's first marriage, the Princess Charlotte, afterwards Princess Gabonelli, but Lucien refused his consent to the scheme (cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoleon et sa famille*, IV, 207) and the girl's own madcap and giddy behaviour turned Napoleon's thoughts finally away from her.

³ Godoy had in fact thought of marrying the Prince of the Asturias, who was a widower, to his sister-in-law, Maria Teresa de Bourbon, and niece of Charles IV.

and of everything else that was going on, annoyed me. I didn't answer, and I went so far as to abuse my ambassador, whom I suspected for a moment of having had a hand in this suggestion.

"So far was I from expecting any change in the Spanish situation that I did everything possible to make the Court of Lisbon see reason. Talleyrand, who thought these measures would lead to peace with England, even sent Lima there,¹ but being sold to England, the Court vacillated for several days and finally would hear of nothing of it. It was necessary, therefore, to sign the Treaty of Fontainebleau for the express purpose of clearing up all subjects of disagreement with the Spaniards before occupying Portugal. It was very important to me at that time to remain on good terms with them. My whole political plan depended upon that agreement. Talleyrand, who was much to the fore in my affairs and was conducting the negotiations with Isquierdo, could have told you how important it was. I was far from expecting the scandalous events that were about to disgrace the country and change for us the whole aspect of affairs. I went into Italy,² and sent you to Petersburg, although the son's attempts against his father, their quarrels, and the palace intrigues, had already detached many people from our interests. Things were finally brought to a climax by Ferdinand's ambition. All ties were broken and all the conventional feelings wounded.

"In this situation, I had to make up my mind to some policy. In the person of the father and his favourite, Spain had been on my side; now, by the new course of events and in consequence of the intrigue which was deposing Charles IV in favour of his son, Spain would be against me unless I were to become the accomplice of Ferdinand. This role was against my principles, and would have been unworthy of me. I could not, however, deceive myself as to the consequences of this revolution. It was soon clear to me that the Court, split up by unpleasant intrigues, would sacrifice the true interests of the country and its relations with us if, considering only my immediate

¹ M. de Lima, Portuguese Ambassador at Paris.

² The Emperor set out for Italy on November 16, 1807.

advantage, I were to take my stand on the side of Charles IV. A mean or underhand policy has always revolted me. I should perhaps have been well-advised to support Ferdinand, who seemed to be at that moment the leader of the Spanish people; but to do that would have been to betray the King, for it was notorious that ambition towards the throne was what directed the son and Infantado.¹

"Hatred of the favourite was a useful pretext for their ambition. The interests of Spain had no place in the affair, which was an intrigue of the scraglio and nothing more. To take my share in it would have made me the partner of the son in his infamous conduct and treachery toward his father. I have picked the Crown of France from the gutter in which it had been dropped; and having raised it to the heights of glory, I could not aid in degrading the sceptre of Spain and the sacred authority of a king and a father.

"The position was such that if I were to declare myself in favour of the legitimate authority of the father against the usurping son, that would be a declaration contrary to the will of the nation and would bring down upon the French the hatred of the Spaniards. Moreover, that policy, which would be against my own interests, could have no other effect than to maintain and continue the disorder and disrespect in which the present reign was involved. I could not make myself the support of Godoy against that proud people. I was determined that if I had to meddle in the affairs of that nation it should be in order to save and restore it; so I decided to wait. I merely watched. Although, in the last resort, I owed nothing to a Court which had threatened me in the moment when it thought I was in difficulties, I nevertheless enlightened Charles IV as to his position; but the intrigues of the Prince of the Asturias and the favourite were a stumbling-block in the way of every action. I was soon convinced both King and nation would fall victims in this situation. Ferdinand, who had asked me to marry him, implored me to protect him;

¹ Don Pedro de Toledo, 30th Duke of the Infantado (1771-1841), was the intimate friend of Ferdinand, who appointed him Colonel of his Guards.

the King asked me to defend him. As to the favourite, he would agree to anything that saved his face and preserved his influence. Cowardly as a counsellor and base as a citizen, he thought of nothing but himself. I would not soil myself by taking part in these intrigues, but delayed the ratification of the Treaty Duroc had made at Fontainebleau until affairs had come to some better order.¹

"Meanwhile, Junot's army had occupied Portugal, which the Court abandoned, going instead to Brazil.² This obliged me to make new schemes. I thought it best to leave them to wash their dirty linen by themselves: and to abandon Portugal to them but exclude them from this side of the Ebro. That would make the Government answerable to me for the maintenance of the measures taken against the English and would give us the Basque provinces. Fundamentally the Spanish would gain by the exchange, which could not fail to suit them. A good offensive and defensive treaty and the position which that gave us with each other would have made true allies of them; but stupidity, fear, and the differences between the father and son made everything miscarry. Perhaps also I allowed Isquierdo, who went to Madrid to negotiate an agreement, to see too clearly my reluctance to meddle in their quarrels and my contempt for Godoy and all their intrigues.³ Suspecting my unwillingness to support him, the aged King took fright, and was on the point of going to America.⁴ None of them, however, had the courage for a forceful resolve. They preferred to sit down and make plots against each other and put their subjects' hands to the dagger. I had done nothing to bring these things about—which were not to my advantage. I sent into Spain more troops than I had estimated,

¹ On January 10, 1808, the Emperor indefinitely postponed the publication of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. The Spanish had ratified it on November 8, 1807. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *l'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 109 and 128.

² On November 27, 1807.

³ Isquierdo went to Madrid in December 1807, and set out for Paris again on March 11, 1808.

⁴ In March, 1808.

in order that, whatever the outcome, events should not turn definitely against us—which the terror of the favourite and the intrigues of the English, who already had a hand in Ferdinand's schemes, might have brought about. Murat, who commanded the army, achieved nothing but stupidities, and led me into a mistaken line of action.

"The Spanish affair," the Emperor repeated, "arose solely out of a chain of circumstances which no one could have foreseen." It had been a great annoyance to him, and had forced him into actions never planned by him. No human calculation could have been equal to the exceeding stupidity and weakness he had met with in Charles IV, or to the culpable ambition and double-dealing of Ferdinand, who was as mischievous as he was contemptible.

He added that Ferdinand had come to Bayonne on the advice of Escoïquitz,¹ who thought by that course to secure a wife and a kingdom for him. And the old King also came there, of his own choice. The Emperor repeated to me several times that on that occasion he had spoken frankly to the Spaniards who had come to Bayonne: he had not disguised from them his opinion of Ferdinand, even before his arrival. It had therefore depended on those who came before him to warn him: and for him to turn back whence he had come.²

The Emperor added that even after the arrival of Ferdinand he had remained for a long time undecided. He then remarked that, since the affair had turned out badly, everyone would now expound its course in his own fashion, in order to justify himself: and that he was blamed for this undertaking, as he was for everything that did not succeed, in spite of the fact that he had been guided in this considerable enterprise only by what seemed to him, after mature reflection, to be in

¹ Don Juan de Escoïquitz (1762-1820), Archdeacon of Toledo, former tutor to the Prince of the Asturias, who had complete confidence in him.

² Charles IV and Marie-Louise disembarked at Bordeaux on April 30, 1808. Ferdinand had been there since the 19th. Napoleon had entered the town on the 14th, and on the 17th established himself in the château of Marrac.

the best interests of the Spanish nation as well as of the French. He repeated again that no one could conceive the blindness of the counsellors who had the confidence of those princes: or the infatuation of the Viceroy¹ for the Prince of the Peace, for whom he retained his solicitude. No one could imagine, added the Emperor, the hatred of the mother for her son or of the son for his father and mother. The Queen had told him once that they thought Ferdinand capable of everything, even of poisoning. The King and she feared more than anything that they might fall into his hands. It was that thought which made them leave Spain, whither they feared to see him return, and which always turned them aside from any plan for their return.

These princes, the Emperor also told me, used to vie with each other in telling him the story of their wrongs and complaints against each other. This habit reached such a point that it often made him blush for them, and he would try to break into the conversation so as not to soil his ears with so much that was disgusting. Each of them played for his own hand. Not one of them had ever had a thought for the interests of Spain.

The Emperor spoke of Escoïquitz, whose sole idea had been to get Ferdinand married at Bayonne.

"He's a petty intriguer," the Emperor said. "Nevertheless I should have done just as well for myself if I had joined hands with him in the scheme, since Ferdinand was at that time the idol of the Spaniards. In such a case it would certainly have been said that I incited him and that I was a partner in his conspiracy. Anything seemed to me better than that. There were three courses I might have followed in this affair. I chose the one which was indicated to me by my concern for the well-being of Spain and our own interests. Of the others, the second would have made me accessory to a crime, and the

¹ This must refer to Murat, though he never bore this title. Murat was the Emperor's lieutenant in Spain from February 20, 1808, was appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom of Spain to the King, Charles IV, on May 2, 1808, and on May 4 President of the Supreme Junta of the Government.

last accessory in the humiliation of a nation which was trying to throw off the disgrace of the previous reign. I could not hesitate over the choice, and it was these considerations that prevented me from sending these princes back to Spain, as my own interests advised. Ferdinand would soon have exhausted the enthusiasm of the nation and his father's return would have humiliated him to such an extent that he would certainly have turned to me and called me to his aid within six months. But C—— and M——¹ thought it would be best to take advantage of the moment when everything was ripe and the change all the easier to bring about because they had succeeded in bringing discredit upon themselves at Bayonne, even in the eyes of those Spaniards who were most devoted to their cause. Murat told me fairy-tales, which led me into error. I thought to cut short the misfortunes of the country: I was mistaken. If I had followed my own instinct I should have sent those princes home. To-day, Spain would have been at my feet. I was misled—or rather, the course of events defied all human foresight. Could one have foreseen that Murat would commit nothing but stupidities, and Dupont an act of cowardice?² The Spanish will one day regret the constitution I gave them. It would have given the country new life. It was Dupont's greed, his grasping spirit, his desire to preserve at all costs his illgotten fortune, which led to the Spanish revolt.

“The capitulation of Baylen ruined everything. In order to save his wagons of booty, Dupont committed his soldiers, his own countrymen, to the disgrace of a surrender which is without parallel: and to the disgrace, so damaging in its effect on the Spanish people, of giving the proof of the acts of sacrilege and church-robbery that Dupont had tolerated in order to cover his own depredations. When he stipulated that the soldiers' packs should be examined and his own wagons

¹ Only these initials appear in the manuscript. It is safe, however, to read them as *Champagny* and *Maret*, of whom the first was then Minister of the Interior and the second a Secretary of State.

² The capitulation at Baylen, July 22, 1808.

go untouched he wrote his own infamy on the pages of every history: these are the Caudine Forks of our history. The sight of the stolen objects was the signal for the rising, and those who carried them back made use of them to incite the superstitious people to vengeance."

The Emperor added further: "Marescot¹ is an honest man. He was deceived by Dupont, and he was weak at the moment when he should have been firm. I was severe with him because he was a high officer of the Emperor, and a man in his position should know how to choose a glorious death rather than the disgrace of putting his name to such a surrender—a surrender which the least opposition would have prevented."

Returning to the affairs of Spain in general, the Emperor said that intelligent people, those who knew something of him, would never suspect him of having wished to debase the sovereign authority.

"I look at these things from a higher standpoint," he went on. "I am too conscious of my strength to stoop to such intrigues, so far beneath my character. I proceed more frankly. It would be a more reasonable reproach, perhaps, to say that I shape my policy as torrents shape their bed. You must have heard the details of the revolt while you were at Petersburg from the Russian envoy to Madrid² and from Tchernychev, who came to Bayonne; for the Tsar Alexander, who for a long time refused to recognize King Joseph, did in

¹ Armand-Samuel de Marescot was born at Tours on March 1, 1758, and died at St. Quentin (Loir-et-Cher) on November 4, 1832. He was a Divisional General from November 8, 1794, and Grand Eagle of the Legion from the month Frimaire of the year XII. In 1808 he had been commissioned to inspect the fortifications of Spain. In July he happened to be in company with Dupont, and on account of his relations with General Castanos he had been appointed one of the negotiators of the surrender. On his return to France in 1812, Napoleon degraded him from his rank and exiled him to Tours. Cf. Colonel A. Grasset, *La Guerre d'Espagne* 1807-13, III, 192.

² This Embassy was held, from 1805 to 1808, by Count Gregory Alexandrovitch Strogonoff (1770-1857).

time come to realize that I had nothing to do with these intrigues."

The Emperor discussed M. de Talleyrand: "He boasts that the disfavour in which he thinks himself held arises from his supposed opposition to the war in Spain. In truth, he didn't urge me to it at the moment when it began, for I was myself far from seeing the events which afterwards took place and which brought it about, but no one was more convinced than he that the co-operation of Spain and Portugal and even the partial occupation of those States by our troops was the only way of forcing the London Government to make peace. He was so strongly of this opinion that it was with this object he negotiated with Isquierdo the treaty Duroc signed at Fontainebleau. Talleyrand was the moving spirit of those negotiations, although he held no office. This method of forcing the English to make peace—peace with the object of securing the evacuation of those States—seemed to him of immediate necessity.

"He brought great energy to bear on the situation when the departure of the Court of Lisbon for Brazil altered all our plans. It was he who sent Isquierdo to Madrid. If it were not that he had a great interest in the success of that journey, I should have suspected him of contributing to the anxiety that came upon the King when his agent arrived at Madrid.

"Talleyrand, realizing later that he had been mistaken in the hopes of fortune and influence that he had built upon these treaties, and realizing that I was doing without him, thought himself tricked. Being a clever man, he has no longer attempted anything beyond justifying himself in the eyes of the public for the part he is known to have taken in this affair, and he has constituted himself the apostle of discontent. He forgets that he also conceived the idea, previously, of deposing the dynasty in Spain as we had done in Etruria. I am far from reproaching him for that. He has good judgment. He is the most capable Minister I have ever had. Talleyrand was too well informed about public affairs, and too good a politician, to admit that the Bourbons could return to Madrid when there were no longer Bourbons at Paris or

Naples. Time might perhaps have brought about this change without violence; the interests of France, and even those of Spain if rightly understood, pointed in that direction. There was never anything settled on the point—an infinite range of conjecture, as on all the more far-reaching political questions, and that was all.

“Talleyrand saw and pointed out to me all that intelligent people were thinking and that policy demanded. In a case of difficulty, in a war against a section of Europe, could the French take the risk of having a hostile dynasty on their flank? Talleyrand, who is among those who have done most to establish my own dynasty, was too much concerned in its maintenance, too clever, and too far-seeing, not to advise everything which would tend to its preparation and to the preservation of tranquillity in France. He has pronounced against this war only because he was not made a Minister with plenary powers, as he had hoped. Forgetting then that it was French blood which was being spilt in Spain, he began, like a bad citizen, to preach against the affair more loudly as he saw it taking a bad turn. With him, as with many people, one would need to be always successful. I was sensible of his conduct, and I made him feel it, because his ill-will began with the defeat of Dupont. Like a coward, he threw stones at me when he thought I was beaten.

“Everything that has been done against the Bourbons has been done under his Ministry and was proposed by him. It was he who constantly pressed upon me the necessity of keeping them from all political influence. It was he who persuaded me to have the Duke of Enghien arrested, to whom I did not give a thought until the prefect Shée¹ and the English intrigues of Drake² drew the attention of the police upon him. At the time I was far from attaching the least importance to his stay

¹ Henri d'Alton, Count de Shée, born at Landrecies on January 25, 1739, Colonel in 1791, Counsellor of State from the 18th Brumaire, Prefect of the Bas-Rhin, at Strasbourg, the 4th Vendémiaire of the year XI, Senator on February 5, 1810, peer of France, June 4, 1814, died in Paris, March 3, 1810.

² Francis Drake, called Musca, English agent at Munich.

on the banks of the Rhine, and consequently I was far from having any settled intentions with regard to him. It was either Moncey¹ or Shée who then told me that he often came to Strasbourg. I had not known of it. Berthier and Cambacérès were doubtful about having him arrested, on account of the Court of Baden. Talleyrand insisted: and so did Murat and Fouché.² Taken in by the revolutionaries, and urged on by them, Murat, alarmed by Fouché and Roederer, saw no safety for himself or for me, as soon as he heard of the Duke's arrival in Paris, except in his execution. To listen to him, one would have thought the Government was threatened, the Governor in danger.³ He's a brave man on the battlefield, Murat, but he has no head. He likes only intriguers, and is always taken in by them. All the men who had taken part in the Revolution, the Generals, the men bred in republican ideas, were disturbed by my advance to power. The Royalists, intriguing still and clumsy, spread the rumour, without giving much thought to it, that I was going to play the role of Monk. I was not steady in my seat. To listen to Murat, Fouché, and the rest, one would have thought that public opinion was unsettled: that nothing I could do would calm it; and that in this uncertainty no party supported me, for the weak Royalist party regarded me as only a transitional figure. No party, moreover, could achieve anything. The nation then would be against me: the revolutionaries were

¹ Moncey had been appointed Inspector-General of Police on December 3, 1802. In this capacity, he made a résumé for the Consul of the police reports from all the *départements*.

² In the Council held on March 9, at which were present the three Consuls, the Chief of Justice, Talleyrand, and Fouché, "the two leaders of the opposing parties were M. de Talleyrand and M. de Cambacérès. M. de Talleyrand advised the utmost rigour against the Prince." (Pasquier, *Mémoires*, I, 178.)

³ On January 15, 1804, Murat had been appointed to the command of the 1st Military Division, with the title of Governor of Paris. On the part played by Murat in the affair of the Duke of Enghien, see *Lettres et documents pour servir à l'histoire de Joachim Murat*, ed. by Prince Murat, with a foreword by Paul Le Brethon, Paris, Plon, 1909, III, 83; also Boulay de La Meurthe, *Correspondance*, III, XVII.

afraid of me, but still more afraid of the Bourbons. They scared Murat, and gave him exalted notions.

"For my own part, they made no great impression on me. I protected them because it is the duty of the Government to protect everyone, without distinction. I myself looked at things from a higher standpoint than the rest, and was no more inclined than usual to seek support among the parties; I felt that France needed a government which would embody the results of her sacrifices and the glory she had won, a government whose concern it would be to create confidence and security for all the nation's interests, within and without the country. I felt that I was the man of strength, designed by my nature to preside over these great destinies. I was not so foolish as to work for others when I felt myself the only man equal to the demands of the French nation. I had read history, and, knowing myself capable of dealing with the situation, I was no more inclined to put France at the mercy of the hatreds bred during the emigration than to raise to power men who would show no gratitude.

"So I made a stand. I prepared everything for the reorganization of a monarchy. It is the only form of government suitable for France, and the only one which can keep the European monarchists quiet. They needed me; experience had proved to me that I was not mistaken there. As for the Duke of Enghien, at the moment of sending Ordener to arrest him, I did not consider him of much importance. I thought they would take Dumouriez as well, which was of more concern to me, as his name lent the air of a major conspiracy to the plot. I was within my rights, because the Prince was conspiring against me, as were Georges Cadoudal and the others. All these intrigues were interconnected.

"They caught him *in flagrante delicto*, while the assassins hired by his family, urged on by him and by the English Minister at Stuttgart, were arrested in France, sword in hand. You ought to know this, Caulaincourt. Were not you instructed to effect a reconciliation between ourselves and Baden over the violation of the territory?" I answered yes,

and that some charitably-minded people had even attributed the Prince's arrest to me.

"That is notoriously untrue," replied the Emperor. "The Chief of Police even denounced you at the time as having secretly warned the Prince of Ordener's intention to arrest him, and as being the cause of his having tried to shoot him and only just missed killing him. I didn't believe any of it."¹

The Emperor added that, having given orders for the Prince to be brought to Paris, he was rather undecided as to what policy he should adopt; but Murat, urged on by the revolutionaries, had so impressed upon him that all would be lost if he did not make an example, that without giving his positive consent he had sent orders that the Prince should be tried by military commission, reflecting that this was only a legitimate defence on his part. The Prince asked to see him, and even wrote asking for an audience, but he only learned this after sentence had been carried out.² This haste on the part of Murat, the Emperor continued, was the cause of the police having no time to question him, and of thus missing some important intelligence concerning other branches of the conspiracy.

"Berthier and Cambacérès would have preferred that he should not be arrested, and above all that he should not have come to Paris, since they felt that directly he was there, the situation would be awkward and even embarrassing for me, faced as I was by the nation whom I must leave in no doubt

¹ See in Boulay de la Meurthe (*Correspondance*, II, 230) the report of Jean Baptiste-Claude Charlot (1766-1827), Commandant of the 38th Squadron of the Police in Alsace. He mentions a threatening gesture on the part of the Duke of Enghien, but does not attribute its cause to Caulaincourt.

² For information about this letter—which never existed—see Boulay de la Meurthe, *Correspondance*, III, 27. In this selection inspired by the Emperor, and known under the name of *Lettres du Cap*, *Documents particuliers en forme de lettres sur Napoléon Bonaparte*, 106, more is said about these documents, attributing the delay to Talleyrand rather than to Murat. However, he had declared to Warden (*Letters written on board H.M.S. Northumberland*, London, 1816): "I solemnly affirm that neither letter nor message from the Duke reached me after his death sentence."

as to my intentions. Their common sense told them that I should have to show severity, and at the same time they veered towards leniency.

"Talleyrand, more politic than they, was quite rightly in favour of the arrest. We were not considering then what effect the execution would have upon the people; we saw only conspirators, who, since they wanted to assassinate the first magistrate of France, deserved the same fate.

"Although there was a good deal of talk in Paris about the whole business, I should do the same thing should a similar case arise.¹

"All the same, it is possible that I might have shown mercy had Murat let me know of the Prince's request. He certainly would not have perished if I had received him, even although the law had condemned him, no motive being strong enough to authorize his conspiracies on our frontier and his hiring sixty ruffians to have me murdered. It is not I who have dethroned the Bourbons; they really have no one but themselves to blame. Instead of chasing them out and ill-treating their friends, I have offered them pensions and paid off their servants. They have answered my kindness by arming assassins. Blood calls for blood. However, I have always rejected the proposals made to me. At a million a head I could have found people who struck with greater precision, but such methods were beneath me. Had I known of a plot against their lives I should have had them warned. I showed mercy to Polignac and Rivière² because they were inevitably

¹ It is known that even in his testament (April 15, 1821) Napoleon maintained this statement. "I had the Duke of Enghien arrested and sentenced because it was necessary to the security of the French people, in the interest of whose honour it was done. I should do the same thing should a similar case arise." After these phrases reproduced by Montholon, there is an added note by the latter: "This passage was written in between two lines after he had heard an article read from an English review in which the Dukes of Vicenza and Rovigo were outrageously attacked." (Montholon, *Récits de la captivité*, II, 510.)

² Of Armand and Jules de Polignac and M. de Rivière, arrested on March 4, 1804, for taking part in the Cadoudal plot, the first and third had been condemned to death, and the second to two

conspirators and public morals were sufficiently avenged by the executions of ordinary assassins.

"It is not I, it is not even the leaders of the Revolution, whom the Bourbons should blame for their expulsion; Co-blentz was the cause of the King's death. There are documents in the archives which leave no doubt on that score. They unravel plots which can only be associated with the principal *émigrés*. It was undoubtedly a great crime that the King should have been put to death. Apart from that catastrophe, the Bourbons have no right to conspire against my life. If I were not occupying the throne it would be occupied by another, for the nation did not want them in any case."

The Emperor returned to M. de Talleyrand.

"He is your friend," he told me, adding: "He is a born intriguer, and quite immoral, but he's very witty and certainly the most capable of all the Ministers I have had. We were on very cool terms for a long time, but I am no longer angry with him. He would still be Minister if he had wished to be. I thought before the campaign of sending him to Warsaw, where he would have been very useful to me; but monetary intrigues on his part, and bedroom intrigues on the part of Madame de Bassano prevented this. The duchess, seeing in his entry into politics the probable removal of her husband from the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, to which both husband and wife clung above everything, did all she could to get M. de Talleyrand out of the way. Having started an intrigue with one of her friends, they contrived to make me so annoyed with M. de Talleyrand that I was on the point of having him arrested. I found out the truth too late from the police. It was this intrigue," added the Emperor, "which led to the Abbé de Pradt's nomination, of whom Savary and Duror were so loud in their praises, as also was Murat, who thought him a prodigy of nature because he had the gift of the gab and wrote articles for the papers. Choosing him lost

months' imprisonment. Bonaparte commuted the sentences of death to imprisonment until peace-time, when they could be deported.

me my campaign. Bignon¹ is worth a dozen of him, and would have managed his affairs in Warsaw far better. Talleyrand would have done more there through the medium of Mme Tyszkiewicz's salon, than Maret and the Abbé de Pradt with their zeal and gossiping and all their dealings with Poland, which, thanks to them, I could not turn to any account in the Russian affair, which was in reality Poland's affair."

On another occasion, the Emperor in repeating to me what he had already said about M. de Talleyrand added that it was his inveterate longing for grandeur which had lost him the Ministry, that he had wanted to be a great dignitary, a prince, and, above all, supreme Chancellor of State, but that he, Napoleon, had never wished it, partly because the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs could not be occupied by two people, and partly because it would have been distasteful in the extreme to the Duke of Bassano, who was accustomed to his own manner of working and did it perfectly: "He understood me, which is the privilege of very few people," added the Emperor. "As for Talleyrand, he has always regretted the Ministry because it represented to him a means of getting money, of which he and those around him are always in need. I would, however, give it back to him if he would consent to separate from his wife. It isn't fitting that the diplomatic corps should associate with that baggage. I have no desire that my affairs should be put up for auction by her." I observed that M. de Talleyrand was not on sufficiently good terms with his wife to warrant any suspicion of his confiding in her, or the belief that he would be susceptible to the least influence from her, that he would fall into disrepute if he were to leave her now to enter into politics; that such a condition made the whole thing impossible, which was unfortunate since choosing him would appear to all the Cabinets to indicate moderation and even would seem to be a preparatory step towards peace; that something of the sort was necessary

¹ The Baron Louis-Pierre-Edouard Bignon, born at Guerbaville (Seine Inférieure), July 15, 1771, died in Paris, January 6, 1841. Historian and diplomat, he was at that time the Emperor's Commissary in the Government Commission of Lithuania.

at this juncture to satisfy public opinion in Europe and in France. I added, furthermore, that I failed to understand the importance which he laid on Mme de Talleyrand's removal, since she had already done the honours of her husband's house and had even been received at Court several times. The Emperor replied to this with spirit that Talleyrand would have to change some of the company he kept, besides, that he would have to get rid of his—— and his——, and told me that I had no idea of what went on in that house; when he was Minister the salon was an auction-room with his supposed friends as the brokers; that he wanted no more scandal of that sort; that Talleyrand had believed that he could not do without him and that he would, in consequence, make him supreme Chancellor of State and leave him to look after everything; that, in such an arrangement the Minister would have been merely a head clerk; that he had probably forgotten that he did not want two authorities in the State; that it was the Emperor who was governing; that it was the battles which his armies had won which prompted all the treaties, sustaining his supposed worth and his reputation; in short, that French affairs had in no way grown worse since he had taken other Ministers; that he was satisfied with M. de Bassano; that if he lacked M. de Talleyrand's foresight and understanding in politics, he had at least the merit of suiting him; that it was true also that his wife was displeasing to him; that Mme de Bassano was vain and mischief-making: that at heart she loved intrigue and had perhaps too much influence over her husband, to his detriment; but that M. de Bassano was a decent enough man, a ready worker, accustomed to politics, and that he was very much attached to him; that he certainly had made great mistakes; that it would be a lasting reproach to him not to have prevented the Turks from making peace with Russia, and to have allowed Sweden to escape from our system of alliances, which showed great lack of forethought: that for each spy that he had, even at Bucharest, he should have had twenty; that he was not short of money, and with the help of money one could arrange political affairs in Turkey more or less as one wished, especially in dealing with a plenipotentiary who

would have understood perfectly that he was taking no risk in pocketing our napoleons not to sign a peace with Russia, whom we were at the same time attacking; that Russia had given two million to the Turkish plenipotentiary, and M. de Bassano should have given four; that he deserved the same reproach relatively with regard to Sweden; that it was such a poor country that a few millions would have settled the affair, and a few millions were of no significance in a question of keeping such important military supports. The Emperor drew the immediate conclusion from this that he would not have had Tchitchagoff on his hands and that he would in consequence have stayed in Smolensk. "If these negotiations had not been allowed to come to naught, peace would have been signed. It would not have been before Moscow," went on the Emperor, "for your friend Alexander, threatened by Finland, would not have been able to withdraw his troops in time to hold the line at Dwina. Finland in insurrection, and 20,000 Swedes and Oudinot at the gates of Petersburg, would have given him something to think about. If it had made no other difference than the distribution of fifty or sixty thousand men over the garrisons of Finland, or employed against the Turks, it would have made difference enough, in that my forces would have been superior on every front, and it was in this respect that Russia's real advantage over us was most appreciable."

He added a few further reflections on the disastrous results to highly important affairs of faulty timing, lack of foresight, the delay of even one day, sometimes even one hour:

"I bear Maret no ill will," he said, "for of course I cannot doubt his intentions, still less his cordiality, towards me. It is lucky for him that Ministers in France have not the same responsibility as they have in England: he would not come well out of this. I cannot do everything myself. Maret was the only man who had my secret; having once told him this, I was bound to think that he had understood me and that he was acting accordingly. He did not see that the vital point of this campaign lay in the forces to be provided by Poland,

far more than in some intriguing and in the chattering of the Poles."

I pointed out to the Emperor that his power did not seem to me to have gained in general opinion during the past two or three years; indeed, that in my view we were declining even while we were visibly expanding. I paid tribute to the noble qualities of M. de Bassano; and this seemed to please the Emperor. But I pointed out to him that amongst the general public his Minister was more blamed for having been a supporter of this war, and generally for not opposing His Majesty's warlike zeal, than for the Turkish peace and the Russo-Swedish Alliance, because everyone knew that the Emperor ruled single-handed, and that his Ministers were neither accustomed nor able to settle problems out of hand, to dispose of millions, or to despatch agents with such powers on their own authority. I added that by acting in regard to these Cabinets as he was now saying, M. de Bassano would have given clear indication to Russia that the war which we denied at Dresden was in fact resolved upon. These steps would thus have thwarted his policy.

The Emperor replied that, even if an indiscretion was to be feared in Sweden, it could not occur at Constantinople, and still less at Bucharest with the Turkish plenipotentiary, and that M. de Bassano, being his sole confidant, had had plenty of other resources at his disposal. To my expressions of doubt regarding this assertion, the Emperor replied to me humorously: "When I tell you a thing, you have got to believe it."

The conversation was interrupted by our arrival at a stage,¹

¹ From Mariampol and Gragow, as far as Pultusk, exact details of the Emperor's itinerary are lacking. Neither Bourgoing, Chambray, Fain, nor Roustam have given precise information about this part of the journey, and Caulaincourt is as sparing of detail as they are. M. Albert Schuermans in his *Itinéraire général de Napoléon I*, has reconstructed the itinerary thus: Goldapp (December 8th), Przasnic, Makow and Pultusk (December 9th); but he does not state the source of his information. But it would seem, from what Caulaincourt has already said that the two travellers passed by way of Augustowo.

where supper had been ordered. The Emperor seemed displeased with me. He was tired, and his displeasure was heightened by the fact that he could not shave, as he wished to do, because Roustam had not arrived.¹ He lay down as usual on the long couch which is usually to be found in Polish houses, and rested there for an hour. Supper restored his good humour. That evening we were very well entertained. Was it in my honour? Or had the postmaster, as he approached the end of his course, been less afraid of indiscretion? I cannot tell. The fact remains that we were in an excellent house, enjoyed an excellent supper, and that the masters of the house did the honours with much care and discretion, if they did know that this was the Emperor.

Every morning between eight and nine o'clock, when coffee could be obtained at a stage, the Emperor drank a cup with milk, sometimes without emerging from the sledge. At night, between five and nine, according to the particular stage, the courier ordered supper for us. We rested there for an hour, sometimes an hour and a half when the meal was slow in coming, so that M. Wonsowicz and the courier could also have time to eat. On arrival the Emperor sometimes made his toilet. He bathed his eyes, and stretched out on a couch, for since the time when we left his carriage, he could no longer go to bed. I took advantage of this time to make hasty notes of our conversations, at least of the matters which seemed to me to have some interest.

On December 10th, two hours before dawn, we reached Pultusk, where I dispensed with the services of our worthy postmaster, whom the Emperor suitably rewarded.² While the horses were being changed the Emperor, feeling chilled, entered the local postmaster's house, he being away from home. His young wife made haste to light a fire, and to prepare the coffee and soup which we asked for, as we had suffered

¹ Roustam remained behind after Gragow, in a slower sledge than the Emperor's, and did not overtake him until reaching Warsaw. Cf. Roustam, *Mémoires, Revue Rétrospective*, VIII, 157.

² The postmaster from Mariampol entrusted with organizing the change of horses on the route.

severely from cold during that night. A Polish servant-girl, half-dressed, poked and blew the fire as well as she could, and nearly burnt her eyes over the poorest fire that ever was made. The Emperor inquired what this poor girl earned. It was so little that he remarked that the sum would hardly suffice to keep his heavy clothing in order. He bade me give her a few napoleons and tell her they were for her dowry. The poor child could not believe her eyes, and it was not, I think, until after our departure that she realized her joy and her small fortune.

The Emperor remarked that, in that class, it was possible to make many people happy with very little money.

"I am impatient, Caulaincourt," he added, "for the day of a general peace, so as to get some rest and be able to act the good man. We shall spend four months in every year travelling within our own frontiers. I shall go by short stages with my horses. I shall see the cottage firesides of our fair France. I wish to visit the Departments which lack proper communications, to build roads and canals, to help commerce and encourage industry. There is an enormous amount to be done in France; there are Departments where everything has to be created. I have already busied myself with many improvements and through the Ministry of the Interior I have collected very valuable information. In ten years' time I shall be blessed as whole-heartedly as I am hated to-day. In some seaports commerce is selfish to the point of injustice, constantly anxious to profit, heedless if others lose. Whatever happens, it is I who have created industry in France. A few more years of perseverance, a few more bivouacs, and Marseilles and Bordeaux will soon be gathering in the millions they have failed to win."

The soup and coffee lingered, and the Emperor, numbed by the cold and the growing heat of the fire, fell asleep. I seized the opportunity to make notes. When he awoke, his sorry meal was soon swallowed and we clambered into our sledge again. Although the snow was knee-deep the Emperor visited the defences of Sierock and Praga.¹ We shook the

¹ Sierock is half-way between Pultusk and Warsaw. Praga is a suburb on the right bank of the Vistula, opposite Warsaw.

snow off as best we could before re-entering our cage, for such was exactly the shape of the ancient box in which we were. It was so cold, and we were so pleased at having found this means of progress, in spite of the depth of snow everywhere, that the Emperor's vanity did not assert itself until we reached the gates of Warsaw. On reaching the bridge,¹ we could not repress a humble reflection on the modest equipage of the King of Kings. The aged box, which had once been red, had been set on a sled, and had four large windows, or rather panes of glass set in worm-eaten frames which did not close properly. The joins of this carcase, three-quarters rotten, gaped on all sides, and gave free access to the wind and snow, which I had constantly to be sweeping out of the interior of our domicile lest we should be soaked through by letting it melt on the seats.

¹ The Praga Bridge, over the Vistula, leading over to the Trambacks Gate.

CHAPTER IV

From Warsaw to Dresden

IN spite of all these vexations the Emperor continued very cheerful. He seemed delighted to find himself at Warsaw, and was very curious to see whether he would be recognized. I think he would not have been sorry to have met someone who guessed his identity, for he traversed the city on foot and we did not take our seats in our humble sledge until we had crossed the main square.¹ It was so cold that no one who could keep warm within doors set foot abroad, and the Emperor's green velvet cloak with gold braid only attracted the attention of a few humble passers-by, more eager to regain their own firesides than curious about the names and quality of the travellers, whose costumes however engaged their attention. They turned to glance, but did not stop. Anyhow, it would have been difficult to recognize the Emperor, for the fur cap he wore covered half his face.²

¹ "As soon as the Emperor had crossed the Praga Bridge he alighted from his carriage and entered Warsaw on foot, making his way to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, where accommodation had been prepared for him. He asked to be taken to the hotel by way of the Cracow Boulevard (Krakowskie), which was at that time the main thoroughfare of Warsaw. 'I should like to find myself in that street again,' he said, 'for I once held a great review there.'" (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 194.)

² Napoleon "went the length of the Cracow Boulevard (Krakowskie) at the hour when that part of the city is most crowded. He wore a fur-lined green velvet cloak with gold braid, and a large sable cap. It is surprising that he was not followed nor recognized." (Countess Potocka, *Mémoires*, 334.) "The Emperor was wearing great fur boots; he was dressed in a magnificent green velvet cloak with gold braid; in addition he wore a hood, also of green velvet, his face was almost entirely concealed, so he was not recognized by anyone." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 195.)

At eleven o'clock we alighted at the Hôtel de Saxe,¹ where Amodru had arrived only a few moments previously. I at once sent to the Director-General of Posts to order the Duke of Vicenza's horses for Glogau, for it was always I who was the distinguished traveller, and the Emperor simply my secretary, under the name of M. de Reyneval.

Having established the Emperor in front of a poor fire in a room on the ground floor at the end of the courtyard,² I made my way to the ambassador's residence, which was near at hand in the Saxony Palace.³ On entering the house I encountered M. de Rumigny, one of the secretaries of the legation⁴ who had been with me at Petersburg, and whom I was delighted to meet again. He announced me to the Ambassador who was not a little astonished to see me, especially dressed as I was,⁵

¹ Caulaincourt is mistaken in this. Chambray, Bourgoing, Countess Potocka and de Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade dans le grand-duché de Varsovie en 1812*, 209) agree in saying that the Emperor put up at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and not the Hôtel de Saxe.

² M. de Pradt, whose hatred and dishonesty render his narrative so suspect, cannot, however, have had any inducement to be other than truthful when he described the Emperor's apartment in the following terms (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 210): "He was in a low-ceilinged little room, freezing cold, with the shutters half-drawn to prevent his being recognized. A wretched Polish maidservant was on her knees puffing at a fire of green wood which rebelled at her efforts, sputtering out more damp into the chimney than heat into the room."

³ On arriving at Warsaw M. de Pradt first occupied an apartment on the ground floor of the residence of Count Stanislas Potocki; he subsequently moved to the Bruhl Palace, which belonged to the King of Saxony. Cf. Countess Potocka, *Mémoires*, 308.

⁴ Marie Hippolyte Gueilly, Marquis de Rumigny, born in Paris, September 7, 1784, died at Brussels, February 14, 1871, was Secretary to the Embassy, and was later attached to the Emperor's Cabinet. Under Louis-Philippe he was French Minister to Switzerland, and Ambassador at Turin and Brussels.

⁵ M. de Pradt, who has travestied this interview of December 10th into a caricature, in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 207, says: "The doors of my room were flung open and gave entrance to a

but who was even more amazed, believing neither his ears nor his eyes, when I said that the Emperor was at the Hôtel de Saxe and was asking for him.

"The Emperor!" he repeated again and again in astonishment.

When he had somewhat recovered his surprise he said:

"How does he come to be here, Your Grace? How is the Emperor?"

These were M. de Pradt's first questions.

"The Emperor is on his way to Paris; we have left the army at Smorgoni; by now it must be in position at Wilna."

"The Emperor would have been more comfortable here than at the hotel."

"He wishes to remain incognito; we are starting again at once."

"Will you not take something, if only a plate of soup, Your Grace?"

"I am taking luncheon with the Emperor at the hotel. But send a bottle of Burgundy there. His Majesty prefers that wine; and as he has been unable to obtain any on the road he will be very glad to find a good glass."

"Is the Emperor's health good? What state is the army in?"

"The army is in a dire plight, overwhelmed by misery, hunger and cold. Only the Guard still looks like a body of troops."

"M. de Bassano writes of nothing but successes. . . ."

"Actually we have beaten the Russians everywhere, even at the crossing of the Beresina, where we took 1600 prisoners, as I counted myself."

"M. de Bassano said 6000."

"The fact remains that we beat the Russians, who ought to have beaten us."

tall man who stalked in, supported by one of my embassy secretaries. 'Let us go; come, follow me!' said this phantom. His head was enveloped in a silken shawl, his face lost to sight in the depths of the fur in which he seemed buried, his gait hampered by fur-lined top-boots. It was a kind of ghost-scene."

"Why make out that we have taken 6000 prisoners. And why, in such grave circumstances, when it is essential that he should know the truth, write to an Ambassador as if he were the editor of the *Moniteur*?"¹

"The number of prisoners is of little matter, as we cannot keep them."

"What is to hinder us?"

"How are we to feed prisoners when our own men are littering the road-side, dying of hunger?"

"Have we suffered heavy losses?"

"Too heavy," I answered, with a deep sigh. "These disastrous results are well worthy of those who urged this war. What folly!"

"Not everyone urged it. Not everyone has deceived the Emperor as to what would happen. But what does it matter? Your Grace will have justice done you now, for it is well known that you did your best to prevent it. As for me, I have not hesitated to displease the Emperor by exposing the true facts of the situation and the state of Poland. I continually write to the Duke of Bassano; but he only replies by sending accounts of victories which deceive nobody here. This country is ruined. It has been crushed."²

I brought the conversation to a close by leaving the Ambassador to change his clothes, and returned to the Emperor. He was all the more impatient to see M. de Pradt because, being dissatisfied with him, he was anxious to show his displeasure. Ever since leaving Sierock the Emperor had grown more excited as the moment of meeting the Ambassador grew nearer, and he repeated again and again what he had already said about him. For this reason he did not alight at his ambassador's house, which I had suggested as more comfortable and convenient for seeing the various members of the Polish Government he wished to interview.

¹ "It was not until December 2nd that I was told of the crossing of the Beresina. The Duke of Bassano, in his usual way, turned it into a marvellous victory." (De Pradt, *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 206.)

² Compare this account with that of Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 208).

"I refuse to stay with a man whom I am going to dismiss," he said. "He has given me too much cause for complaint."

I passed over in silence what the Emperor added to this speech and so often repeated in the access of his ill-humour. He blamed M. de Pradt for meanness, for lack of tact, for misdirecting the zeal of our adherents.

"He has ruined all my plans with his indolence," said the Emperor. "He is a chatterbox, and nothing more. I have often wished to see Talleyrand here."

The Ambassador arrived just when the Emperor was saying these last words.¹ Napoleon received him coldly. M. de Pradt came forward eagerly and asked how His Majesty was. His words had the ring of genuine concern;² but this seemed to be even less in his favour. The Emperor would rather have been blamed, even criticized and found fault with by any other man, and was less disposed to tolerate this man-to-man air of interest on the part of one against whom he was deeply incensed. Perceiving the effect he was producing, M. de Pradt became colder and more reserved. These preliminaries showed me clearly that I should be doing the Ambassador a service by leaving him with no witness, and so giving him an opportunity of private conversation with the Emperor; and I left the room. But the same reason made the Emperor desire the presence of a third party, to increase M. de Pradt's discomfort, and he bade me remain. When I explained, however, that certain orders had to be given for the continuation of our journey, and a cloak had to be bought for him, he let me go, bidding me send for Count Stanislas Potocki,³ as well

¹ This was at half-past one, according to Pradt (*Histoire de l'ambassade*, 209). This would appear to be rather late if, as Caulaincourt says above, Napoleon arrived at the Hôtel d'Angleterre at eleven o'clock.

² "Only genuine feeling could inspire or excuse in a subject speaking to his sovereign, the tone in which I asked, 'Are you well? I have been so worried about you, but here you are. How relieved I am to see you!'" (Pradt, *Histoire*, 211.)

³ Count Stanislas-Kostka Potocki, father-in-law of Countess Anna, was born in 1757, and died at Willanovie, September 14,

as the Minister of Finance.¹ He added that I was to get everything ready for a speedy departure, and to return immediately. I bought the cloak for the Emperor, who suffered severely from the cold at night time although I covered him with half my own cloak, thereby making myself exceedingly uncomfortable.

I hurried forward the dinner and returned to the room adjoining the Emperor's, to send off a courier to Wilna and an outrider to precede us to Posen. As the door between the two rooms closed imperfectly, I could not help hearing the Emperor heaping on his Ambassador all the reproaches he had already enumerated in his conversations with me.² He concluded by saying that neither his tone, his conduct, nor anything about him, had been French. He reproached him with making plans for a campaign, with acting the soldier when he knew nothing about military matters, and added that he ought to confine himself to politics and saying his Mass. He had been sent to Warsaw to represent France honourably, and not make petty economies and lay plans for a fortune for himself, which would have been assured him had he performed his duty as he ought. But as it was, he had achieved nothing but blunders.

M. de Pradt tried to justify himself, protesting his devotion, his zeal, his regret for any errors he had committed, his desire to do better. He defended and justified Poland for not having done all the Emperor desired for the success of the Russian expedition. He enumerated the sacrifices she had made, the forces she had raised, which he placed as high as over 80,000 men.³ He declared that everyone was ruined, that not a

1821. He was President of the Council General of the Polish Confederation. Cf. Bignon, *Souvenirs d'un diplomate : la Pologne en 1812-13, 1864*, 40.

¹ Count Thadeus Mostowski, died in Paris, December 6, 1842.

² Compare this account with M. de Pradt's attempt to ridicule the conversation in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 213.

³ "I explained to him why and how the dispersion of the Polish forces had ended in reducing an army of 80,000 men practically to invisibility." (De Pradt, *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 212.)

crown-piece could be found in the whole country, that financial help would have to be given if anything at all was to be done. The more M. de Pradt justified himself, the angrier the Emperor became. He blamed him for the incalculable consequences that must ensue from his neglect to call up the levies, and added that, from the Ambassador's own words, it was plain that he was courting foolish popularity, that a clever man like himself ought to have seen, and made the Poles understand, that to prolong the struggle by withholding the means of bringing it to a speedy end, would merely injure themselves.

The Emperor summoned me; the Ambassador's presence seemed to be infuriating him. His gestures, the way he shrugged his shoulders showed his temper so clearly that I really shared the embarrassment of his victim, who was in an agony of mortification. I felt I should be doing them both a kindness by going out for a moment, and returning an instant later to inform His Majesty that dinner was served. But he had again started his tale of reproaches and went on, now with vehemence, now with cold disdain, until, seeing a card on the mantelpiece he stopped suddenly in the middle of a sentence, snatched it up, wrote a few words on it, and handed it to me.¹

All this time M. de Pradt was trying to get in a few words in self-defence, casting blame on all the French authorities, of whom he complained bitterly, as well as of the generals, etc. It seemed to me that, on some grounds, his remarks were not without reason.

This criticism of the military aspect annoyed the Emperor

¹ This paper, as it transpires later, was an order to instruct Maret to arrange the immediate replacement of M. de Pradt. The latter had observed the incident; at a later period Vitrolles, who enjoyed his confidence, was to write: "While the Archbishop was carrying on his impertinent discourse, Bonaparte took up a pencil as though to write some urgent order, and passed over to M. de Caulaincourt a paper on which he had scribbled 'Get rid of this scoundrel.' The Master of the Horse went out of the room as though to carry out the order, and shortly afterwards called the Archbishop and dismissed him, I know not on what pretext." (Vitrolles, *Mémoires*, I, 195.)

still more; he would not even permit any comments on the operations undertaken by Prince Schwarzenberg. As for the tactics of the troops in the Duchy of Poland, of which the Emperor actually approved no more than did the Ambassador, he told him sharply that he would not allow a priest to pass any judgment on the matter. The Emperor spoke of the defence of the Duchy, which he considered would be a simple matter if the levies were raised, although the Ambassador held that the country was exposed and in great peril. The Emperor always argued on the hypothesis that the army would remain at Wilna, and that Schwarzenberg would do what was expected of him. He anticipated holding and defending the Duchy by Polish levies, and by a general rising. He even wished to cover his army quarters by a screen of those Polish Cossacks of which he was never tired of talking, though, for lack of money, they had not yet even been collected into depots.

The discussion had by now taken a turn for the better and was no longer disagreeably personal, and M. de Pradt, zealous in military controversies, adopted a rather dogmatic tone in refuting, with some reason as it seemed to me, what the Emperor laid down in the tone of a master who expects silence rather than disagreement. The Ambassador even seemed to allow himself more freedom in his observations than would have been permissible in private conversation. He saw safety only in what we no longer possessed—well-organized and well-paid armies; and he asserted that without money not a horse nor a man could be hoped for in the Duchy.

"Then what do the Poles want?" the Emperor demanded sharply. "It is for them we are fighting, for them that I have lavished my treasure. If they mean to do nothing for their own cause, it is useless for them to work up such a passion for the restoration of their independence."

"They want to be Prussian," answered the Ambassador.

"Why not Russian?"¹ rejoined the Emperor indignantly.

¹ These words are almost textually identical with those reported by Pradt in his *Histoire de l'ambassade*, 213.

He turned his back on M. de Pradt, telling him to return in half an hour with the Ministers who had been summoned.

When M. de Pradt had gone the Emperor launched into a long and violent tirade against him, accusing him of being afraid of the Russians, and of having, throughout the campaign, frightened rather than reassured the Poles and of having ruined all his plans in Poland.

"Carry out at once the order I gave you," he said sharply, referring to what he had written on the card which he had handed to me in M. de Pradt's presence. It said: "Tell Maret that fear of the Russians has made the Archbishop of Malines lose his head; he is to be sent back and someone else entrusted with his duties."

I had thrust the card in my pocket. At the moment I continued pacing up and down with the Emperor, without answering or executing his orders.

Noticing his silence, I reminded him that dinner had been growing cold for some time, but he paid little attention to this, directing me again to carry out the order. After a moment I pointed out to him that this change would produce a bad effect on the Council at Warsaw.

"If M. de Pradt," I said, "has, as Your Majesty thinks, wheedled the members of the Council, he will be all the more agreeable to them at a difficult time. No harm will be done by leaving him here for some time. He will do his best to remedy his errors, and circumstances will stimulate his zeal. He will even do better than a new man could do. If you dismiss him, he will say it is for having protected the interests of the Duchy, and that will have a bad effect."

The Emperor then enumerated the different orders which the Duke of Bassano had given M. de Pradt concerning levies. He went into lengthy details as to the means placed at the disposal of the Ambassador and the Duchy, and concluded by saying:

"You shall write from Posen. Now let us dine, so that I can see the Ministers and then start off."

So that the Emperor should not go back on his decision, I threw the card in the fire in his presence. Preoccupied by affairs, anxious to see the Ministers and be on the road again, His Majesty did not remain long at table, although the cup of coffee we had snatched at Pultusk had refreshed us but little.

"Business nourishes me," said the Emperor, "and I have a surfeit from discontent. This priest has annoyed me. What impudence! He complains of everyone, criticizes everything. What has *he* ever done to entitle him to blame others. He is losing this campaign for me."

The Emperor also received Count Taillis, lieutenant-general in command at Warsaw, who had nothing to say in praise of the Ambassador's behaviour in the moment of crisis.

The Emperor accorded a good reception to the Ministers who accompanied M. de Pradt.¹ These gentlemen spoke of the dangers His Majesty had run, and their happiness in seeing him in such good health. His presence was in itself sufficient guarantee of a brighter future, etc. The Emperor brushed aside the idea that he had ever run any risks. He laughingly observed that rest and quiet were only the lot of sluggish monarchs, adding that he thrived on fatigue. He told them that the army was still strong in numbers, with more than 150,000 men, which was hardly the truth. The Russians, according to him, were not holding out; they had been beaten in every direction, even at the Beresina. These Russians were no longer the men of Eylau and Friedland. Before three months had elapsed he would have as strong an army as he had when he opened the campaign. His arsenals were full, he had all the essentials in equipment and troops to make a splendid army. From his private cabinet in the Tuileries he could impose his will on Vienna and Berlin better than from army headquarters. "I carry more weight when I am on my throne in the Tuileries than when I am leading my army," he said. He spoke of Marengo and

¹ Potocki and Mostowski.

Essling, battles that had been almost lost yet which, a couple of hours later, had placed Austria at his disposal.¹

I went into the other room to make certain that everything was ready. The sledges were drawn up before the door.² I paid the hotel-keeper, gave a few directions, and made notes of the strange conversation I had just heard. After dinner, while the Emperor was at his toilet, I jotted down particulars of what I had said to the Ambassador and of his conversation with the Emperor. As soon as I was able to pay attention to what was being said, I heard the Emperor attributing his reverses solely to the climate, and admitting that he had possibly stayed too long at Moscow because, having sent Lauriston to Russian headquarters, he had hoped to be able to conclude a peace. He said that Wilna would be held, agreeing that the Russians had shown strength of character, and that they loved the Tsar Alexander. The burning of Moscow, he acknowledged, had upset his plans. He emphasized the fact that it was the Russians who had set fire to their own capital. He spoke of the need for showing strength of mind on our side, adding that even grave reverses might lead to astounding successes. He talked with eagerness of the levies to be raised, especially of the indispensable Polish Cossacks.

The Ministers emphasized the distress of their country. The Emperor did not seem to pay attention to this. M. de Pradt supported them generously when they asked for money. The Emperor granted some millions from the Courland contribution and from the depreciation of the coinage,³ and concluded

¹ See Countess Potocka's account of the interview between Napoleon and Potocki. Her concluding remarks are: "The fascination that this extraordinary man exercised over all who heard him was so powerful that my father-in-law, who had been in the depths of gloom when he left us, returned full of hope." *Mémoires*, 332.)

² This is to say, the Emperor's sledge and that with which Roustam had come to join his master.

³ "He granted, as a loan, a sum of two to three millions in copper from Piedmont, which had been lying at Warsaw for three months, and three or four millions in paper, drawn from the contributions of Courland." (De Pradt, *Histoire*, 219.)

by announcing the imminent arrival of the diplomatic corps from Wilna.¹ He then started to talk of his journey, and then I entered the room. The Ministers urged the Emperor to rest for a few hours while relays were being organized along the road. They inquired whether he was going to take the Silesia route by Glogau.

"Yes, by Prussia," answered the Emperor.

This crossing of the Prussian territory, short though it was, worried him. He told them, questioning me as he did so, that I had given all the necessary instructions for relays, and that he was about to start at once. He then dismissed the Ministers very graciously, amid their renewed expressions of devotion, in which they were all joined by M. de Pradt, who seemed to have forgotten the rebukes administered before dinner.

We mounted our sledge without further delay,² and once again the Emperor gave vent to his spleen against M. de Pradt. He passed the most bitter comments on the Archbishop's terror when the Russians had nearly reached the Duchy, and on the bad example given by his behaviour on that occasion. He spoke of his breeding and his manner, which were out of keeping, His Majesty said, with the education he had received, with the company in which he must have mixed, particularly with the religious calling he had chosen. The Emperor kept on alleging that M. de Pradt had lost him Poland and ruined his campaign. It had been a mistake to pay heed to foolish intrigues and not send Talleyrand, who would have served him well, as he had previously done at Frinckenstein.³

The most difficult part of our journey had certainly been

¹ On December 11th, Napoleon wrote to Maret from Kutno: "Let the diplomatic corps know that I am going to Paris, that they must no longer remain with the army." (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19384.) Throughout the campaign the Ambassadors had remained at Wilna, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

² According to Countess Potocka (*Mémoires*, 335) they left about nine o'clock in the evening; according to Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 196) it was at seven.

³ April-May, 1807.

accomplished. We had still to cross the little strip of Prussian territory after Glogau,¹ and this worried the Emperor more than all the rest of his journey. We travelled at great speed, but when a shaft of our sledge broke we were obliged to stop at Kutno to have it mended, which delayed us more than two hours.² The sub-prefect recognized the Emperor, and gave him the best reception that lay in his power. His wife and sister, two pretty Polish girls, were thrilled with excitement at having His Majesty under their roof, and were delighted beyond measure at seeing him in good health. No physiognomy is so expressive as the Polish. The Emperor appreciated the warmth of his reception, but had so much business on hand that there was no opportunity for chatting with the ladies or the sub-prefect, and he employed his time in dictating orders for the Duke of Bassano and for Warsaw. He instructed his Ministers³ to hurry on the levies and the arming of the Duchy, informing them of what he had granted the Poles and ordering the Duke to send a fresh courier to Vienna and to Prince Schwarzenberg. He also issued orders to Lauriston, who was to go to Warsaw,⁴ instructing him to remain there,

¹ It was before and not after Glogau that the Dresden road crossed Silesian Prussia before entering Saxony. In his *Itinéraire de Napoléon Ier de Smorgoni à Paris*, 66, Bourgoing says: "He [Napoleon] followed the straight line Lenczizca-Glogau-Bautzen."

² December 11, 1812. Between Warsaw and Kutno the road passed by way of Lowicz. According to Countess Potocka (*Mémoires*, 335), who had it, she says, from Wonsowicz, as soon as he arrived in the city Napoleon wanted to turn aside from his road to visit Countess Walewska at her château at Walewice. Caulaincourt was opposed to this. Madame Walewska had left Warsaw, where de Pradt's tactlessness rendered her position difficult, and had gone straight to Paris some time before Napoleon passed through Warsaw.

³ See Napoleon's letter to Maret dated Kutno, December 11, 1812, in the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19384.

⁴ Lauriston received the order to go to Warsaw in a letter from the Emperor, dated at Smorgoni, December 5, 1812. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19381.) His instructions were: "You will order provisions, see to the levy of the confederation of the nobles, and endeavour to arm them."

to assume command of the entire army, and to arm Modlin and Sierock. To General du Taillis,¹ whom he had seen at Warsaw, he confirmed in writing the orders he had given him verbally, that he was to keep all the troops passing through the city, and to organize and arm the National Guard, etc.

The Emperor grew impatient with my slow writing, my fingers being still numb with cold, and decided to write himself while I made minutes of what he had already dictated. But his own fingers were stiff, his handwriting was at the best illegible, and after writing two letters which he could not even read himself he was obliged to dictate fresh ones to me. Dinner put a stop to this correspondence. I preserved the two historic letters written in the Emperor's own hand, and sent off the despatches while he dined. By this time the sledge was repaired. His Majesty barely took time to eat; I managed to snatch a piece of bread with which to make my meal as we went on our way. The Emperor was deeply touched by the reception he had met with at Kutno, and instructed me to tell Duroc, when we arrived in Paris, to send a gift to the sub-prefect's wife.

During the journey from Warsaw to Kutno the Emperor spoke of England, of the difficulty of forcing her to make peace unless some financial crisis or internal embarrassment forced the hands of the Cabinet. At the moment he seemed to regret that his idea for the restoration of Poland had embroiled him with Russia. He agreed that she was of great weight in the Continental System.

"Rumiantsof," he went on, "was aware how advantageous to me this alliance would be. He was no genius, but he was a man of sound judgment, with a thorough understanding of the European situation as it developed after Tilsit, and as we envisaged it at Erfurt. He also realized so fully the advantages we should draw from the alliance in France's relation to

¹ Antoine Jean Baptiste Amable Ramond du Bosc, Count du Taillis, born at Nangis, November 12, 1760, died at Paris, February 3, 1851, formerly aide-de-camp to Berthier, had lost his right arm in 1807. Promoted General of Division, June 29, 1807, he was appointed Governor of Warsaw at the beginning of the 1812 campaign, having filled similar posts at Munich and Erfurt.

England, that he would not even believe in hostilities until we had crossed the Niemen. He always doubted my real intention of attacking Russia. He thought my object was to make them shut their eyes to what had happened, and that my hostile demonstrations were only to force Russia not to receive neutrals and to consider herself fortunate that I stopped at threats.

"I could not permit this admission of pretended neutrals," the Emperor continued, "as it furnished the English with a means of eluding the continental blockade. But I would have passed it over, and we should have reached an understanding if I had been able to entertain any hope of persuading the Tsar Alexander to make a great march on India. At the point we had reached in our struggle with England, whose Cabinet was staking all, this would have been the only way of alarming the London merchants. The nation would have forced the Government to treat for peace. But after Erfurt I felt suspicion in the air. For my part, affairs in Spain were more or less spoiling my other projects. Alexander and Rumiantsof did not incline so much as I had expected to the partition of Turkey, and thus all my plans made at Tilsit had to be modified. I may have been obliged to look at things from another angle. By some means or other we must get out of the ditch we are in, find some means of forcing England to make peace, weaken Russia, solve the problem of Europe by creating a great buffer State. It would be a splendid and noble thing to rob England of any hope of forming a new coalition, by sapping the strength of the only great Power which could still be her ally."

The Emperor told me that he had long thought that Constantinople was coveted by Russia. In the hope of an expedition, or at least a demonstration, against India, he had planned another expedition by sea (possibly independent of the land operation), to which he would have been able to furnish a strong contingent, if he could have persuaded the Russians to allow a French corps to march through their country. But from what he knew, and from what the Tsar and Rumiantsof had told him, this would have been difficult to negotiate.

The Emperor appears to have planned his expedition against India in the following manner. He had obtained from the navy all the necessary information. It seemed to him that the main obstacle was the impossibility of carrying sufficient water for 25–30,000 men for such a long voyage. Otherwise he had found no insuperable difficulty. He would have directed the expedition against Surat,¹ a landing being made at some point on the Mahratta coast, where the people were natural enemies of the English and ready at any moment to take up arms against them.² The expeditionary force would have been 30,000 strong. They would put in at only one port, Mauritius, to water and take on board provisions and leave any sick. These latter would have been replaced by two or three thousand negroes for whom the colonists would be paid in ready money.

France, the Empress, and the King of Rome were subjects of daily conversation. His Majesty never wearied of exclaiming how glad he would be to see them again, and expressed the most tender affection for them. The Empress he praised constantly, talking of his home life with a feeling and a simplicity that did one good to hear; of France and the French with an enthusiasm which was consoling after so many sacrifices.

“I make myself out to be worse than I really am,” he said to me laughingly. “For I have observed that the French are always ready to eat out of one’s hand. They lack seriousness; consequently, that quality impresses them most. I am supposed to be severe, even hard! So much the better! It saves me from having to be so! My firmness passes for insensibility; and it is partly to this impression that we owe the existing state of good order, although the Revolution is so recent, and although we have a generation among us reared

¹ A port of Hindustan, on the left bank of the Tapti. It had belonged to the English since 1800.

² The Mahrattas occupied the entire region of Hindustan from sea to sea between the province of Agra and the Krishna. After the fall of Tippoo Sahib, in 1799, they were in constant strife against the English.

in disorder and with no conception of morality or religion. So I do not complain of my reputation. Come, Caulaincourt, I am a man! Whatever some people may say, I have bowels and a heart, though it is the heart of a sovereign. The tears of a duchess move me to no pity whatsoever, but I am touched by the woes of peoples. I want to see them happy, and the French shall be so. If I live ten years, there will be contentment everywhere. Do you believe that I do not like to please men? It does me good to see a happy face, but I am compelled to defend myself against this natural disposition, lest advantage be taken of it. I proved this more than once with Josephine who was always asking me for things, and wheedled them out of me with tears when I ought to have refused her."

The Emperor often asked me if I too should not be delighted to see my loved ones again. This good and natural manifestation of His Majesty's real feelings refreshed me more than I can say. I should have liked the ears of all Europe to hear his words, and every echo to repeat them. I am positive that I lost not one syllable of this conversation, which I would gladly have prolonged indefinitely.

The Emperor was most anxious to meet his couriers in order to get the eagerly-awaited letters from France—the first we had received since Smorgoni. He accordingly pressed on our journey as much as he could. At Posen we rejoined the road the army had taken on its way to Königsberg.

Meanwhile the Emperor reviewed his Cabinet. He praised the Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès as a man of prudent counsel and a great lawyer. His equitable and singularly clear judgment had thrown much light upon several articles in the Code, notably those presenting the greatest difficulties. Alluding to the death of the King: "Only fear," he said, "prevented him from voting his acquittal.¹ Cambacérès was far from being a revolutionary. He was a man worthy of confidence and incapable of abusing it; he had always made the best use

¹ In the Convention, Cambacérès voted "Yes" on the question of the guilt of Louis XVI, but on the question of the application of the death penalty he voted for a reprieve until the cessation of hostilities.

of the trust given him; his high **repute** was most justly acquired."

The Emperor cited the Duke of Rovigo as a man entirely devoted to him, a man of strong character and independent viewpoint. He had a good heart, he said; he is thoroughly sound, even obliging. He would often have been duped if the Emperor had not stopped him. But he was too self-interested, and this displeased His Majesty, who had decided to deprive him of the gaming monopoly for he was incessantly asking for money although he had already been given large sums, and his fortune, since he became a Minister, had risen to five or six millions. As for the rest, the public was unjust in its opinion of him. It was held up against him that he had been present at the execution of the Duke of Enghien.

"But," he added, "he had received orders to attend the execution, and, being commandant of the picked *gendarmérie*, it was his duty to be there. Anybody else would have obeyed orders exactly as he did. He was a much better man, much less of an inquisitor, than Fouché. It is now the fashion to to laugh at Savary. It was, indeed, ridiculous that a Divisional General, Minister of Police, should be taken from his bed and whisked off to gaol by a madman just escaped from a lunatic asylum.¹ This incident very naturally made all Paris roar with laughter, and ridicule is more fatal to those in authority than their mistakes."

Turning later to the Duke of Otranto, he said: "The man is merely a schemer. He is prodigiously clever and facile with the pen. He is a thief, and steals anything he can lay hands on. He must be worth millions. He was a great revolutionary, a man of blood. He thought to atone for his misdeeds, or anyhow to cause them to be forgotten, by making up to the relatives of his victims, and to all appearance he has become the protector of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He is a man whom it may be useful to employ, for he is still the fugleman of many revolutionaries and is, besides, exceedingly capable. But I can no longer place any confidence in him."

¹ A reference to the Malet conspiracy.

The Duke of Gaeta,¹ who appeared next in this survey, was, His Majesty said, a good financier, a man of method and probity, who had rendered great services in his sphere. M. de Barbé-Marbois,² whom he named next, was a schemer with the appearance of a Quaker and the deceptive semblance of an honest man.

"I was duped by him for a long time," he said, "for he professed a certain rigour in his principles, and a severity of judgment on other people and on events, which made me think he would be no more indulgent to himself. He is discontented with everything, fondling power, detesting it and belittling it. He is, at heart, an unprincipled man, full of envy and fault-finding, devoid of capacity. Thinking him a man of talents, I placed great confidence in him for some time, only to discover too late that I was mistaken. I paid dearly for the error. He is safe in the Court of Accounts; he cannot make blunders there, and he is obliged to carry out his new functions with the probity for which he is renowned."

Upon my observing that he had the reputation of being virtuous, above all, unimpeachably honest:

"Oh, he is honest enough," replied the Emperor. "As for being virtuous, that is simply a part he plays; at heart he is a rascal."

Of M. de Fontanes³ the Emperor said:

"He is too much of a sycophant. He has great talent. He serves me with zeal and for the moment is directing Public Instruction very competently. The Revolution has made us

¹ Marius Michel Charles Gaudin, born at Saint-Denis, January 16, 1756, died at Gennevilliers, November 5, 1841, Duke of Gaeta, August 15, 1809. He was Minister of Finance from November 11, 1799, until April 3, 1814, and from March 20 to June 23, 1815.

² Marquis François de Barbé-Marbois, born at Metz, January 31, 1745, died at Paris, January 12, 1837. He was Minister of the Public Treasury from September 27, 1801, to January 27, 1806, when he was dismissed in consequence of an imprudent financial measure. In 1808 he was appointed President of the Court of Accounts.

³ Fontanes had been Chancellor of the University since March 17, 1808.

too full of the Greeks and Romans; we must give our children monarchical ideas, and that is quite in accordance with Fontanes's opinions; or so, at least, he proclaims. If I allowed him, he would even go too far in that direction. He is a man of parts, but his head is small. If I had not checked him, he would have given us an education of Louis XV's style. He thought it would please me, but I stopped him. One day I said to him; 'Monsieur de Fontanes, at least leave us the republic of letters!'¹ These words brought him on the right road again. I am not afraid of energetic men; I know how to use and guide them. Besides, I can do nothing opposed to equality, and youth, like the nation, clings to equality. If you have talent I can push you forward; if you have merit I can protect you. This is recognized, and it is very useful to me. Fontanes would have reared marquises for me; their only place is on the stage; moreover, ideas to-day have dethroned them there since Molé left the stage² and Fleury³ disappeared. I need councillors of state, prefects, officers, engineers, professors. It is essential to give an impetus to teaching and to season these young heads of Greeks and

¹ In 1806 Fontanes, at that time President of the Legislature, had inserted in the *Mercur de France* the advance notice of a book he had written in support of absolute monarchy. It was this that drew the reply from Napoleon quoted here.

² François René Molet, or Molé, born at Paris, November 24, 1734, made his first appearance at the Théâtre Français, October 7, 1754. He died at Paris, December 11, 1802. Molé had abandoned with reluctance the parts of love-sick grand gentlemen which he had formerly rendered with incomparable art. (L. de Lanza de Laborie, *Paris sous Napoléon: le Théâtre Français*, 104.)

³ Abraham Joseph Bénard, known as Fleury, was born at Chartres, October 27, 1750, and made his debut at the Théâtre Français, March 7, 1774; he quitted the stage, April 1, 1818, and died at Valençay, March 3, 1822. "In his great comedy parts, which he had shared with Molé and played alone after the latter's death, instead of the impetuosity and seductiveness which Molé threw into the characters, he exhibited a certain dry distinction, with an aristocratic falsetto voice, that portrayed so exactly the gentlemen of the old Court that it made the period live again to all who had known those times and the old regime." (*Ibid.*, p. 107.)

Romans. It is important to give a monarchic turn to the energy of these memories; for that is history. I shall give my first attention to education; it will be my first care as soon as peace is established, for it is the safeguard of the future. I want it to be public for all, even that of my son, in part. I have a great plan in that connection."

To my regret this conversation was interrupted by our arrival in the early hours of the morning [December 12th] at the Hôtel de Saxe, at Posen.

"Give me my despatches," were the Emperor's first words.

In accordance with my instructions, the director of posts¹ had kept the two which came through. The Emperor's impatience was such that he would have ripped open the cases if he had had a knife at hand. Numb with cold, my fingers were not quick enough for him in working the combinations of the padlocks. At last I handed him the Empress's letter and one from Madame de Montesquiou enclosing the report on the King of Rome. This was the first news since leaving Wilna, for luck had been against us, as we had met no courier between that town and Mariampol. The Emperor had never ceased to speculate on the impression that would be caused by the absence of any news of the army, so it can easily be imagined with what eagerness he read the despatches from the Arch-Chancellor and the other Ministers. I could not tear the envelopes open quickly enough to keep pace with his impatience. He scanned the pages rather than read them, to obtain a general idea of their contents. After this hasty review, he settled down to perusing carefully those despatches which had struck him as being the most important. He did me the honour of reading aloud the letters from the Empress and Madame de Montesquiou.

"Haven't I got an excellent wife?" he said.

The particulars that the Empress gave him about his son, all of which were confirmed by the governess, delighted His Majesty. Notwithstanding that he was so preoccupied with affairs, in this moment he was just a good husband, indeed the

¹ At Posen the Emperor rejoined the line of communication between France and the army, which he had left at Mariampol.

best of husbands, and the fondest of fathers. I cannot describe my pleasure in contemplating him at such moments. His joy, his happiness, glowing in every feature, went to my heart.

He made me read the Arch-Chancellor's letters, as well as communications from the Ministers of Police and War. I took advantage of the momentary freedom afforded me while the Emperor was going through his correspondence to give orders for the continuation of our journey. The carriage had been unable to catch us up,¹ and as the Emperor had given me no time to take money out of it when we parted from it, all my funds were exhausted. I had some money brought me by the director of couriers.² I notified the General commanding in Glogau that we should be arriving, and that he was to have the city gates ready³ and supper prepared for us. I then employed the two hours left before starting in putting my notes in order, and completing the particulars I had taken of our last conversation since leaving Warsaw. The Emperor took an hour's rest. He lunched, and we then took to the road again. We were now meeting the bearers of news, and the farther we proceeded the shorter we made the intervals between receiving despatches. In this manner we were able to receive in one day's journey our friends' letters covering three or four days. Every letter received was a source of fresh happiness to the Emperor. He made me read most of his despatches, except those in the post packet.⁴ Only once did he give me a few extracts from this to read, saying, as he did so:

"What imprudence! What fools men are! I have not

¹ This refers to the carriage left behind at Gragow. See above, p. 416.

² When they left Smorgoni, by order of Duroc 50,000 francs had been paid over to Caulaincourt by Peyrusse, Treasurer of the Privy Purse. (Peyrusse, *Mémorial et archives*, 131.) On his part, Méneval had given 14,000 francs to Constant, who had stayed behind.

³ That is to say, that the city gates should be opened on the arrival of the travellers during the course of the night.

⁴ Enclosing the communications from the "Cabinet Noir."

sufficient opinion of mankind to be malicious, as they say I am, or eager for revenge!"

The Emperor's observation was very just. The imprudence and impudence expressed in some of these intercepted letters afforded opportunities for incontestable proof that His Majesty was neither malicious nor vindictive; for in the circumstances he might well have justly been severe, whereas when I reached Paris I saw the two persons who had given occasion to these observations, and they had not been in the slightest degree molested or reprimanded. One of them occupied a position at Court.

The Emperor was highly satisfied with the particulars he received as to the situation in Paris and in France. Everyone was so accustomed to seeing him triumph over difficulties, and even extract some advantage from events which seemed the most contrary, that public confidence had been but little shaken by the long silence of which people complained. This interruption in communications had not produced exactly the effect that he had anticipated.

"In the actual circumstances," the Emperor said, "this sense of security is rather a pity, for, when it comes, the army bulletin will upset confidence.¹ A certain disquiet would have been preferable; it would have prepared the ground for bad news."

Speaking of the Minister of War,² he called him a typical courtier, the most conceited man he had ever met:

"The greatest happiness that could befall him would be if he could persuade everyone that his grandfather had come out of the Ark.³ He is an honest man, of mediocre talents, without character, and so addicted to flattering that one can never tell how much reliance to place on any opinion he may express. He does not know me yet," added the Emperor. "He

¹ The 29th Bulletin, dated from Molodetchna, December 3rd, and sent direct from Smorgoni to Paris, appeared in the *Moniteur universel* of December 16, 1812.

² Since August 9, 1807, this Minister had been General Clarke.

³ Clarke, who came from an aristocratic Irish family, was the son of a subaltern quartermaster at Landrecies.

imagines I am like Louis XV, and that he has to get round me and be agreeable to me. If I kept mistresses he would be their most devoted servant. He considers the Malet affair a great conspiracy with many ramifications, and would like to have many Jacobins, and even prominent figures, arrested. But I think Pasquier and Savary¹ are right in judging that that audacious attempt was simply hatched in the minds of a few idiots. It was quite right not to arrest any prominent men, for rigorous action causes irritation. If there are any guilty parties at large they will not escape the police, and it would not do to have the Government betraying unwarranted suspicion. In the eyes of Europe, as of France, it is preferable that this conspiracy should appear as nothing more formidable than a madman's escapade. Savary anticipated my wishes perfectly by adopting this attitude."

On our arrival at Glogau that evening² the General in command was not a little surprised to discover that the Master of the Horse was none other than the Emperor himself. His Majesty went closely into the state of the place and the condition of the country, issued various orders, and barely took time to sup, so anxious was he to be on the way once more. We set off in the carriage offered by the General and accepted by the Emperor, who was very tired from being unable to lie at full length in the sledge.

Certain as I was that the snow would prevent us going far on wheels, I took the precaution of having our faithful sledge follow us; and it was as well that I did so, for being unable to proceed in the carriage at more than a walking pace, we had not left Glogau far behind when we transferred into our less comfortable conveyance. Half-frozen in this modest vehicle, which we should have done well not to leave, the Emperor

¹ At this time Prefect and Minister of Police.

² December 12th. "The fatigues of the road had so exhausted his travelling companions, who were already enfeebled by the privations experienced during the retreat, that while the Emperor was questioning the Governor of Glogau as to the condition of the fortress, Count Wonsowicz fell asleep as he sat at table and fell from his chair. The Emperor did not have him awakened until the moment of departure." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 66.)

was unable to sleep, and began to talk of the army, of which, owing to the rapidity of our movements, we could have no news. He longed to get into Saxony.¹ He did not like having to cross Prussian territory, and this led to the following conversation:

"If we are stopped, Caulaincourt, what will they do to us? Do you think I shall be recognized, that it will be known that I am here? You are popular enough in Germany, Caulaincourt, you speak the language; you protected the postmasters and took all my gendarmes to furnish them with escorts. They would never allow you to be arrested or ill-treated."

"I do not suppose they will have very grateful memories of a protection that did not hinder their being pillaged."

"Bah! They may have suffered for twenty-four hours, but you had their horses given back to them. Berthier never stopped talking of your claims on their behalf. Have you ever been in Silesia?"

"Only with Your Majesty."

"Then you are not known here?"

"No, Sire."

"I did not reach Glogau until after the gates had been closed for the night. Unless the General or the courier have been chattering in front of the postilion, it is impossible that anyone should know I am in Prussia."

"That is true; and no one would imagine that it was the Emperor travelling in this sorry vehicle. As to the Master of the Horse, he is not of sufficient importance for the Prussians to compromise themselves by arresting him. Your Majesty's journey has been so speedy that no one on the road so much as knows about it. Some sort of plan would have to be arranged before any attempt could be made on us; even a spiteful and determined man must get three or four kindred spirits to help him."

"If the Prussians were to stop us, what would they do to us?"

"If it was the result of a definite plan, not knowing what

¹ The travellers could not enter Saxony until just before Bautzen.

to do with us they would kill us. So we must defend ourselves to the utmost extremity. We may be lucky; there are four of us."

"But if they take you alive, what will they do to you, my good Duke of Vicenza?" said the Emperor jokingly.

"If they take me it will be because of my secretary, in which event I shall be in a bad way."

"If we are stopped," rejoined the Emperor briskly, "we shall be made prisoners of war, like Francis I. Prussia will get back the millions she has paid, and will ask for millions more."

"If they dared strike such a blow, Sire, we should not get off so cheaply as that."

"I think you are right. They fear me too much; they would want to keep me."

"That is highly probable."

"For fear I should escape, or lest some terrible reprisals might be undertaken, the Prussians would hand me over to the English."

"Possibly!"

"Can you picture to yourself, Caulaincourt, the figure you would cut in an iron cage, in the main square of London?"

"If it meant sharing your fate, Sire, I should not complain."

"It is not a question of complaining, but of something that may happen at any moment, and of the figure you would cut in that cage, shut up like a wretched negro left to be eaten by flies after being smeared with honey," rejoined the Emperor, with a laugh.

And there he was for quarter of an hour, laughing at this foolish notion, and the idea of that figure in the cage.

Never had I seen the Emperor laugh so heartily, and his gaiety was so infectious that it was some time before we could speak a word without finding some fresh source of amusement.

It was with considerable relief that the Emperor reflected that nothing could be known of his departure and that the Prussians, even if they did learn about it, would not dare take any action against him while their troops were in the midst of ours and we were as strong as they imagined us to be.

"But a secret assassination, an ambuscade, would be easy," said His Majesty, thus betraying his lively desire to be across this strip of Prussian territory, which gave him food for such serious as well as amusing reflections.

This thought so preoccupied him that he asked if our pistols were in good order, at the same time making sure his own was ready to hand. I had inspected them at Posen, so we firmly made up our minds to give a warm reception to the first person who interfered with us. Any inquisitive fellow who had thrust his head in at our door that night would have fared ill.

The change of relays interrupted our conversation. As the Emperor had not wished the courier for Glogau to be more than an hour ahead of us, and as he had travelled slower than we had, he was only a short distance in front, and the relay horses were not ready. The Emperor could think of nothing but this delay. Accustomed to having everyone at his beck and call, he could not understand that it should take more than the half-hour by which the courier was in advance to have his horses ready. We were at a Prussian posting-house, and what I attributed to nothing but the habitual slowness of Prussian postmasters seemed to him intentional delay. I had satisfied myself as to the real causes of this delay, but had not succeeded in arousing the postmaster from his imperturbable nonchalance; nor had I been able to urge on the postillions who, according to their wont, harnessed their horses as slowly as possible so as to leave them time to feed. I spent my time going to and fro between the stables and the sledge where the Emperor sat, perished with cold. To while away the time he asked for some tea, which can be had at any posting-house in Germany. Two cups warmed him up a little, but they did not seem to allay his impatience, which increased every instant. He asked if our escort had followed us. Of the six gendarmes we had taken from Glogau only the two were left who sat at the back of the sledge, and they were half-perished with cold. At last, after waiting for an hour, we took the road again.*

We passed one of the most painful nights on the whole

journey. The change of vehicle had frozen us. For my own part, it was thirty-six hours before I was warm again.

"I thought," said the Emperor laughingly, as soon as we were on the move again, "that the curtain was rising on the first act of the Cage-play. How was it possible to take two hours to harness four horses, or even six—which were waiting in the stables."

But ill-fortune dogged our steps. Our sledge broke, and this made our progress slow. We reached Buntzlau,¹ where we had to stop to have it mended. We took advantage of this delay to have our breakfast. The Emperor chatted with the inn-keeper, a worthy German. I acted as interpreter. His Majesty asked him as to the state of the country, taxation, the administration, and what they thought of the war. Taking us for simple travellers, the inn-keeper replied to all his questions with the utmost candour. The less his replies were made to please the Emperor, the more the latter plied him with questions, often observing to me with a smile:

"He is right: he has more common sense than many a man at the head of affairs. He isn't merely a courtier."

The kindness and sincerity of this inn-keeper delighted the Emperor. His place was taken by a seller of glass beads who forced her way into the Emperor's room. The confiding nature of this woman, who, not knowing in the least who we were, yet wanted to let us have the whole of her stock on trust, without receiving any money or even giving any indication of why she placed this confidence in us, amused him very much. He bought some necklaces, rings, etc., and said to me:

"I will take them to Marie Louise, as a souvenir of my journey. It is only fair, Caulaincourt, that we should divide them between us. You must give some to the lady of your heart. Never had man such a long *tête-à-tête* with his sovereign as you have had. This journey will be an historic memory for your family. The Emperor will never forget all the care you have devoted to him."

¹ On the Bober, in Silesia; the morning of December 13th. The whole of this account furnishes hitherto unknown details as to the Emperor's journey.

He was so good as to give me half of what he purchased, instructing me to pack up the other half for the Empress. He then threw himself on a hard bed, telling me to let him know as soon as the sledge was ready. While the Emperor rested I hurried forward the repairs to the sledge, and occupied myself with the continuation of my notes from the time we left Posen.

All the Emperor's remarks showed that his mind was continually occupied with the army, and that he persisted in believing that it could be rallied at Wilna. His opinion did not change. He made all his arrangements and based all his plans on this presumption.

"The bad effect of our disasters will be balanced in Europe by my return to Paris," he said.

The consolation afforded by reflections such as these made our journey a happy one. The nearer we got to France, where all his hopes were centred, the less did the Emperor seem preoccupied and careworn.

"Schwarzenberg is a man of honour," he said. "He will keep his corps in readiness. He has no wish to become a traitor the first moment that Fortune turns her back on us. The Prussians will model their conduct on that of the Austrians. I shall be at the Tuileries before anyone knows of my disaster or dares to betray me. My cohorts make an army of more than a hundred thousand men, well-disciplined soldiers led by war-trained officers. I have the money and arms to form excellent cadres, and before three months have passed I shall have conscripts and five hundred thousand men under arms on the banks of the Rhine. The cavalry will take the longest to collect and form, but I have the wherewithal to do everything in the coffers of the Tuileries."

Our conversation turned on many other matters, notably on his family, his army service, the Directory, his negotiations, the departure for Egypt, his return, his ideas and projects in Egypt and on his return to France. To avoid the repetitions which inevitably resulted from my daily jottings, for the Emperor reverted on more than one occasion to some of the

subjects under discussion, I shall here make a summary of the most striking points in our conversations :

The Emperor was the son of Charles Bonaparte and Letizia Ramolino. His family was of Tuscan origin, his ancestors being inscribed in the Golden Book of the first families of Bologna.¹ His father was of a junior branch that established itself in Corsica in the fifteenth or sixteenth century.² He was chosen deputy representing the Corsican nobility, and died at Montpellier in 1785.³ The Emperor was one of the most promising cadets at the military school of Brienne, and on this account was transferred to that of Paris and thence to the Grenoble regiment of artillery.⁴ His great-uncle Lucien, archdeacon of Ajaccio, was a father to him, and died in 1791 at a very great age.⁵ The Emperor was an ardent partisan of Paoli until he realized that the General was betraying France to England. Paoli liked him very much. It was for the same reason that Napoleon broke with Pozzo di Borgo who was implicated in Paoli's intrigue.

Employed in the Army of Italy, Napoleon was sent to the

¹ The question of the origin of the Bonaparte family has been obscured by flattery. In 1859 a report by the Minister of Public Instruction, quoted by M. de Brotonne in *Les Bonapartes et leurs alliances*, p. 2, states that the name had been borne by several families whose common origin it would be in vain to attempt to prove. Nevertheless Federico Stefani, in *La antichità dei Bonaparte, con uno studio storico sulla marca trevigiana*, has succeeded in tracing the Treviso branch back to the twelfth century. It was from that branch that the Sarzana family sprang, and their existence is proved in 1215. This Sarzana family was the stock from which came the Corsican Bonapartes.

² The family was established in Corsica at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Francis, who died at Ajaccio in 1554.

³ February 24, 1785. In 1777 he was deputy of the nobility at the Corsican State Assembly.

⁴ This is a mistake. On leaving the military school Napoleon was gazetted to the La Fère regiment, and was in garrison, first at Valence and then at Auxonne.

⁵ Archdeacon Lucien, brother of Napoleon's grandfather, was born at Ajaccio, January 8, 1718, and died at the same place, October 15, 1791.

siege of Toulon, where, supported by the Representative Gasparin¹ as well as by General Dugommier, he directed the attacks against that town which ended in its capture, despite the ineptitude that Carteaux² had shown in the undertaking. After this he was employed in the Army of Italy under General Dumerbion,³ but was put on the retired list by Aubry.⁴ By the influence of Barras he was again employed on active service in the Affair of the Sections of Paris.⁵ Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior, in 1796⁶ he married Madame de Beauharnais and went to replace Schérer in the Army of Italy. The events of that glorious campaign are well known. He defeated three Austrian armies, drove them from the shores of the Mediterranean back to Carinthia, where he dictated peace, it might almost be said in spite of the Directory, and gave the first example of moderation in his terms since the Republic had been declared. At Tolentino he showed himself equally generous to the Pope, at the risk of compromising himself with the Directory, which was entirely opposed to moderation towards the Head of the Church. He acted in the same spirit towards the Austrians at Campo Formio; and he created the Cisalpine Republic in order to deprive Austria of Lombardy.

¹ Thomas Augustin de Gasparin (born Orange, February 27, 1754—died Orange, November 11, 1793), was deputy for Bouches-du-Rhône to the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, in mission at Toulon, and the only representative of the people to support the plan of attack presented by young Bonaparte.

² By an order dated October 21, 1793, Carteaux handed over the command of the army operating against Toulon to General Doppet who, in his turn, passed it to General Dugommier on November 16th.

³ January 1794.

⁴ After the 9th Thermidor, Aubry, deputy of the Gard, replaced Carnot on the Committee of Public Safety, for military reasons. It was he who retired Napoleon in May 1795.

⁵ Vendémiaire, year IV.

⁶ March 9th.

M. de Merveldt,¹ one of the Austrian plenipotentiaries, tried to seduce him into the service of that country, or at least to draw him away from France in the hopes that he would eventually find himself forced into the arms of Austria. At Leoben, one day, he suggested that Napoleon's position and the victories he had won would necessarily place him at the head of affairs in France and Italy. Napoleon admitted that the possibility of this was only hindered by the unrest and jealousy that were inherent in a government such as that which held power in France, adding that in his opinion this was only an experiment in government. Perceiving from these opinions the direction in which his mind was turning, M. de Merveldt hinted, after a time, that Austria might recognize his merits by giving him a principality in Germany. Napoleon appeared flattered at such a proposal, a form of homage rendered to the talents ascribed to him, but he rejected it as an act of treachery to France against whom he might, in the event of accepting, be called upon to take part in case of war. Suspected by Austria, and faithless to the interests of his own country, this was a part in no way suitable to his character.

"It was to this same M. de Merveldt," said the Emperor, "that I remarked at the outset of these discussions: '*Sir, the French Republic is like the noonday sun; woe to them who see it not!*'"² This answer, uttered at the very first suggestion of recognizing the French Republic in the name of his master, disconcerted the Austrian plenipotentiary. In offering recognition he thought he was offering something on which the French government would set great store. My answer, which gave him an idea of my own character and of the esteem in which I held the dignity and might of France, made him more circumspect. From that moment the Austrian plenipotentiaries dropped all the foolish proposals that they would otherwise have put forward. By the time the negotiations were concluded I had inspired them with the utmost confidence. They found my ideas of moderation and of settling

¹ Count Maximilian de Merveldt and MM. de Bellegarde and Gallo, were the peace negotiators at Leoben.

² Cf. A. Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, V. 155.

the affairs of Europe were different from those hitherto professed by the Committee of Public Safety and the Directory. To negotiate terms," the Emperor continued, "I had to be politic with the Directory, and in the end I was obliged to conclude peace in spite of it."

In the course of this conversation the Emperor asked me whether M. de Merveldt¹ had narrated these facts to me when I had had dealings with him.

"He was a very clever man," he said, "extremely shrewd and well fitted to conduct delicate negotiations. His only fault was that he was altogether too cunning, and consequently made his adversaries distrust him from the very outset. He was better as a diplomat than as a General, though as courageous as he was clever."

The Emperor, who was almost as much in the vein for talking as I was for listening, went on speaking of his Italian campaign and the conduct of the Directory. That campaign and the negotiations of Leoben and Campo Formio developed his political principles. It was from that time that he felt himself destined for a great career. Before then his thoughts had been turned only in the direction of war. His outlook now became profound and extensive. He saw Europe and the interests of France in a very different light from that in which he had hitherto looked on them, and in which the Directory and the men at the head of affairs still regarded them. He felt that there were great things for him to accomplish, although he maintained a reserve that was necessitated by the suspicions and narrow-minded attitude of the Directors, as well as by the opinions that still governed the Generals and the army.

In his conversations with the most prominent Italians, notably with M. Melzi,² the Emperor perceived that he

¹ Count de Merveldt was Austrian Ambassador at Petersburg when Caulaincourt represented France at the Russian Court.

² François Melzi d'Eril (1753-1816) had been appointed by Napoleon as envoy from the Cisalpine Republic to the Congress of Rastadt. In 1802 he was Vice-President of the Italian Republic, in 1805 Chancellor and Keeper of the Seals to the Kingdom of Italy. In 1807 he was made Duke of Lodi.

astonished them by the breadth of his views and his ability to take in everything at a glance. The realization of this, while giving him an estimate of his own worth, rendered him all the more circumspect. Obligated as he then was to expose himself frequently to danger, he acquired a fatalism of outlook that subsequently became natural to him. His appointment as representative at the Congress of Rastadt proved clearly that the Directory desired nothing but to keep him at a distance.¹ Realizing that it would be as awkward for those in Paris to have him there as it would be for him to be there, he turned his mind to devising some way of extricating himself from this difficult position. The Directory lacked the means to embark on the expedition against England which had been considered. That would, moreover, have put him at the head of an army in France, and it was alarming enough to have him at the head of one in Italy. So it was decided to send an expedition to Egypt. The Emperor would have preferred to remain in France as a private individual, but he soon realized the impossibility of following such a course. It would have been foolish and impolitic to repulse the men who wished to be friendly with him, yet it gave umbrage when he received them. His victories, which had secured the stability of the Directory, were already the cause of his being looked upon askance. However much the government might have failed, it seemed to offer some state of tranquillity to the French, who were tired of revolutions.

"Nations, like individuals," said the Emperor, "learn only by their own experience, more often than not by misfortune. Revolutions and successive changes have never given foresight to anyone. Desiring neither to lend my support, nor to fortify with my acquiescence and advice a Directory devoid of any idea that was noble, generous or national in sentiment, composed of men guided solely by self-interest, whose weakness and ineptitude rendered them defiant, I was confirmed in the opinion that the best course I could pursue would be to

¹ Bonaparte stayed at Rastadt from November 25 to December 2, 1797, in order to exchange ratifications of the Treaty of Campo Formio.

place myself at a distance from it. Reubell, the outstanding figure in the Directory, would have made merely a worthy mayor. Barras was a schemer solely occupied in making his own fortune, having extremely suspect relations with outsiders and perfectly disposed to sell himself to anyone, even to the Bourbons, for it was they who could give him the most money and the best places."

In the course of conversation one day Barras gave the Emperor an inkling of his plans, and from that moment Napoleon avoided his confidences as far as possible, not wishing to be his accomplice. He thereupon decided to go to Egypt. England was deceived as to the object of this much-talked-of campaign, for which such vast preparations were made.

"So true is it," remarked the Emperor, from his experience of many similar occasions, "that the cleverness of the best observers always reaches beyond what is apparent to the eye. They invariably credit others with more than the obvious, more than common sense warrants."

The more it was clear from the preparations and details of the expedition that it was intended for Egypt, the less was it believed that Egypt was its real destination. It was even more successful than could have been hoped, for by unheard-of good luck Napoleon had time to seize Malta.¹ It was this circumstance that first made him believe in what he called his Star. Thenceforward he felt that his plans and undertakings were shared by Providence. The disaster which befell the fleet² soon after his landing in Egypt, although a very serious misfortune, appeared to him in the light of another-proof of the influence of his Star. This idea never left him, and inspired him with confidence, even with an undefinable superstition, for, although not an atheist, Napoleon was not religious.

Talleyrand was to have gone to Constantinople to explain and settle matters with the Porte, simultaneously with the

¹ June 12, 1798.

² The destruction of Bruey's fleet by Nelson at Aboukir Bay, August 1, 1798.

sailing of the fleet for Egypt.¹ But when Napoleon learned that he had not gone, and perceived that he himself was to be left to carry out his task unaided, in spite of what had been agreed upon with the Directory, he was more than discontented, especially when he heard that the Porte was making preparations for war; for this would upset all his plans. Talleyrand, who preferred intriguing in Paris to spending some years in the Seven Towers,² was disconcerted when he saw Napoleon back from Egypt, but he attributed this change of policy to the Directory, who had need of his services and were, moreover, little inclined to facilitate Napoleon's undertaking in Egypt. In addition to all this, experience of the Turks had proved that the mission to Constantinople would have met with little success, for the Turks have very little idea of politics. Nothing would have convinced the Divan that the expedition was anything but an invasion of Egypt by the infidels.

Passing from this to what might have resulted from the expedition, the Emperor added that if the Porte had but understood better where its interests lay, or if the artillery for the siege of Acre had not been captured by the English,³ events of great importance would have taken place, either in the Near East or in India, where he would have destroyed the power of England. As master of Acre he would have been able to carry out one or other of these projects, for the entire Christian population would have sided with him, and with their aid he would have been able to do great things. The French troops would then have been simply the reserve. There would have been no need for caution so far as the Turks were concerned, as they were merely barbarians for whom

¹ Cf. Lacour-Gayet, *Talleyrand*, I, 317, and Karl Ludwig Lorke, *Pourquoi Talleyrand ne fut pas envoyé à Constantinople*, in the *Annales historiques de la Révolution*, I, March-April, 1933.

² A fortress at Stamboul, of which one of the towers, called The Ambassador's Tower, was habitually used as a prison for such foreign diplomats as had given the Sultan displeasure. Ruffin was kept there for three years, from 1798 to 1801.

³ These guns, forming the siege park, were being taken from Alexandria by sea when they were captured by Sir Sidney Smith.

treaties had no significance, even when their government wished to observe them. That nation knew nothing of authority, law or order, except as the abuse of power. As an example of this he cited the conduct of the garrison of El-Arisch,¹ who were foolishly allowed to go free on parole and whom he subsequently found at Jaffa, where their presence made the capture of the place a more costly undertaking, especially as the army was then suffering from the plague. He was obliged to shoot some of those same Turks whom the soldiers, wearied of slaughter, had spared in the assault of the town; for he was able neither to feed them nor take them away, nor send them under escort, and he could not again leave them in his rear, with the possibility of finding them a third time opposed to him, and even the chance of seeing them seize Egypt in his absence.

I omit the familiar details of the Egyptian campaign. General Bonaparte returned to France because the failure at Acre reduced the Egyptian expeditionary force to the condition of an isolated colony if no reinforcements were sent out. The army was in a position to resist the Turks, and even the English if they should make a landing. He left it in a good state, and time proved that he had not been mistaken. We should still have been there if Kléber had lived, if Menou had been a better soldier, and if his Generals had been less quarrelsome and had acted more in harmony under a chief who did not override them. This being the case, General Bonaparte's presence in Egypt was unnecessary. By returning to France he was able to put in order certain affairs that had been neglected by the Directory, which was too much taken up by its difficult and internal dissensions to pay attention to Egypt. These matters having been put right, the army of Egypt might have been reinforced and enabled to fulfil its splendid destiny, even to have furnished us with pledges to bargain for peace, when that should become possible. The Directory has been credited with having had the intention of arresting General Bonaparte. Undoubtedly each of the Directors had this thought in mind, but not one of them mentioned

¹ The fort of El-Arisch was taken on February 20, 1799.

it to his neighbour. The Directory was too feeble, too embarrassed, too full of distrust, too divided against itself to have been able to execute such a step. The reverses our armies had suffered made Napoleon appear in the light of a saviour. Public opinion was for him. The Directory as a whole and each Director in particular wanted to have him on his side and gain his support. Only Moreau counteracted his influence, and that but feebly.

Sieyès had the greatest share in the decision and execution of 18th Brumaire. General Bonaparte had not been deceived by Barras.¹ A chance word let slip by this Director and the indiscretion of a man who thought he was serving the Bourbon cause had laid bare all the intrigues that Bonaparte long suspected. This furnished him with proof that Barras had sold himself to the Restoration party.² Everything that transpired demonstrated clearly the truth of what he had suspected, namely that a revolution was imminent and inevitable. This decided him. Having attained power, he strove to rally all parties, to consolidate all interests, to put an end to civil war. It was to achieve this aim that he tried to make peace with England, though he was unable to accomplish it at first. He perceived that the pacification of the West was a necessary

¹ Cf. Gourgaud, *Sainte-Hélène*, I, 468: "Soon after my return from Egypt," said Napoleon, "he [Barras] invited me to dinner with him in private. . . . In the middle of the meal Barras said: 'The Republic is going badly. . . . The Republic is in such a bad way that only a President can save it, and General Hedouville is the only man I can see as suitable for the task. What do you think?' I answered in a tone that made him see I was not to be taken in by him." The following day Barras went to see Bonaparte. "He tried once more," said the latter, "to get me on his side, saying, 'You see, I will be whatever you decide, white if you wish, black if that is your desire.'"

² It was in Thermidor, year VII (July-August 1799) that Barras entered into relations with the Bourbons through the medium of Fauché-Borel. In the event of success he had been promised ten million *livres tournois* (an old coin worth about 10d.). It is true that in his *Mémoires* Barras pretends that all these manœuvres took place with the knowledge and assent of his colleagues in the Directory.

preliminary to secure this result, and he devoted all his attention to attaining it.

The Emperor returned to the subject of the Bourbons "who" he said, "had no longer any partisans in France. Theirs was a lost cause. But they still have agents, even among prominent officials, and this is convenient for me, as these men serve both parties and keep me informed of what is going on, of what the Princes are planning in England, and of what certain schemers are devising in France. These persons find it to their advantage not to deceive me, and dare not do so since they depend on me for their places. In my turn I use them to make known what I want to be known; and this has been of service to me on more than one occasion."

The Emperor gave as an example the Arch-Treasurer Le Brun¹ and M. Becquey,² enjoining me to keep my own counsel. Only two persons knew this secret. The slightest indiscretion might deprive him of the services they rendered him. He added that they wrote nothing without showing it to him, and that, having persons in his pay in the intimate circles of the Princes in England, he was able, by comparing the reports of one and the other, to make certain that he was not being deceived and to assure himself that the Count of Artois was not spying on him in Paris as he was spying on the Count in England.

¹ The Duke of Piacenza, former Consul.

² François Louis Becquey, born at Vitry-le-François, September 24, 1760, died at Paris, May 2, 1849. When he was deputy of the Haute Marne at the Legislative Assembly he sat on a secret committee appointed by the Directory to bring about the return of Louis XVIII—a committee that was not dissolved until long after Brumaire. In 1810, Napoleon appointed Becquey Counsellor of the University, and after 8th Frimaire, year XII, he was deputy to the Legislative Body. Director-General of Agriculture and Commerce in the First Restoration, he was Under-Secretary of State for the Interior, then Director of Roads and Bridges in the Second Restoration. The reports of the committee of which Becquey was a member, and which, according to Caulaincourt, were known to Napoleon, have been published by Remacle, *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII à Paris sous le Consulat*.

According to the Emperor, the Duke of Piacenza (Le Brun), who had rendered great services at the time of the Consulate, had never accepted any appointment, not even the Consulate on the 10th Brumaire, without the advice and acquiescence of the Princes. Napoleon had not to wait long before proof of this was furnished by a very simple circumstance which had revealed to him the existence of these secret agents. Instead of making a commotion he at once conceived the project of using them, and this was more successful than he ever hoped. It was by this means that he was able to unravel other intrigues, and eventually to put an end to the civil war which rent the country. According to him, Le Brun was naturally two-faced, cunning, disobliging, hard and devoid of feeling, devoured by ambition.¹ Although he had an outward appearance of kindness and honesty, no one possessed less of these qualities than he did; but he had given the First Consul excellent advice. He had directed Napoleon in the choice of men, and his experience had often proved useful.

The farther we went, the more snow we found. The gales that had been blowing continuously for some days had caused such drifts in several places that the difficulties of the road made our progress too slow even for the liking of our phlegmatic Saxon postilions and horses.

The Emperor often spoke of the effect that would be produced by his return.

"The nation needs me," he said. "If it responds to my attentions all will soon be put right."

The news from Paris did not make him forget the army. He was more certain than ever that it would hold Wilna, and

¹ General de Ségur did not share this opinion. "The Second Consul (Le Brun)," said he, comparing Cambacérès with Le Brun, "up to that time more remarkable than remarked, had a noble exterior, full of dignity. He was that rare thing, at once a man of State, a man of letters, and a financier, unostentatiously working for the general good, leaving his good deeds to speak for him, and his best works to survive him unascribed. Bonaparte recognized his merit beneath the gentleness of his character, his calmness, and his retiring simplicity." (Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires*, II, 14.) Cf. Marquis de Caumont La Force, *L'Architrésorier Le Brun, gouverneur de la Hollande*, 349.

based all his calculations on this hypothesis. For my part, I reckoned aloud the days it would occupy in its retreat, as far as the Vistula at least, without arousing the Emperor's annoyance.

"You see the black side of everything; you are not encouraging," was his remark.

What I had observed in the Duchy of Poland left me with no doubts as to the abandonment of Wilna.

"If there are no Polish Cossacks there can be no rest for your army," I said to the Emperor, who agreed that this shortage of cavalry somewhat changed the situation.

He would not, however, admit of the necessity for evacuating Wilna. He enumerated his forces, from the Prince of Schwarzenberg's corps to that of the Duke of Taranto, and was no doubt justified in thinking that numerically he had more men than were necessary to stop the Russians, provided that every one of them had done his duty. He thought that the sense of discouragement in the army had been allayed as soon as they got into touch with the stores at Wilna, and tried to persuade himself that the levies were already raised, or at least were being collected while we were on our way to Paris. To hear him, one might have imagined that no more need be done than march them from the barracks to the frontier. Not admitting the need for the evacuation of Lithuania, he equally refused to admit the existence of those almost insurmountable obstacles which the near approach of the enemy and the fear of invasion would place in the way of raising the levies.

Thus the Emperor journeyed on towards his capital, cherishing illusions such as these and in no way put out with me for not sharing in them. As was natural, our conversation continually reverted to the army, to politics, to the administration, to men we knew, to various institutions, to what he would do to better these, and to his son. He asked me to look about me for a tutor. He passed in review nearly all the men in official positions or at Court, even those of little prominence. The way he spoke of several confirmed me more than ever that, in general, he had but a poor opinion of mankind. It seems to me that this explains the absence of any animosity

towards various persons who had done him real injury; he had every reason to heap reproaches on them, but he contented himself with dismissing them at once and not saying a word. He seemed to place great value on the delicacy of mind and honourable sentiments inculcated by good training in early years.

"It corrects the most vicious traits in a man's character," I have heard him say more than once. "The man who has not been well brought up has a certain uncouthness, a basis of egotism that makes it difficult to rely upon him. Self-interest is his only criterion. He lacks a sense of restraint, and this makes him liable to do anything."

He mentioned several notable men whom he employed in very responsible situations, adding that he did not trust them, that they were capable of betraying him at the first opportunity when they considered it in their interest to do so, although they owed everything to him. According to the Emperor, the binding nature of an oath, fidelity in the execution of the functions or service in which one is employed, the sense of honour that makes it impossible to betray the man one serves, meant nothing to these men: religion and fidelity were sentiments wholly lacking in their constitution.

"Even patriotism," he went on, "is a word that conveys nothing to them if it is not consonant with their own interests."

He added: "When certain people meet with the slightest disappointment, such as the refusal of a post they have requested for some rascal who happens to be a relation, they turn against me; some are even ready to plot against me if I put a stop to their peculations and open pillage."

In this connection the Emperor mentioned certain names so prominent that I dare not commit them to writing. I have no wish to tarnish the glory of these names, which will go down to history.

"But these men," the Emperor added, "are none the less heroes."

He concluded these reflections by observing that some people were wrong in complaining that he did not fill up all the appointments in his gift. Not wishing to exclude any who

might claim their eminent services, he preferred to leave the whole question to be solved by time, which would settle many things. "By then," he said, "the children will be well educated and will make their start in life at a period of peace and calm; they will not have to make their fortunes, and I will give them the recompense earned by the good services of their fathers."

This conversation led the Emperor to speak of the different events of his life. It was with pleasure that he recalled some of the incidents of his youthful days, his success at the military academy, and his family, which had met with so little favour from fortune, though of a distinguished rank in Corsica. He spoke of various affairs of gallantry, of the preference which some society women had shown him above that granted to comrades who were at that time more conspicuous than himself.

"The reading of history," he said, "very soon made me feel that I was capable of achieving as much as the men who are placed in the highest ranks of our annals, though I had no goal before me, and though my hopes went no farther than my promotion to General. All my attention was fixed upon the great art of warfare, and on increasing my knowledge of that branch in which I believed my destiny to lie. I was not long in discovering that the knowledge that I set myself out to acquire and which I had hitherto regarded as the end I needed to attain was very far short of the distance to which my abilities might carry me. So I redoubled my application; what seemed to present difficulty to others to me appeared to be simple."

Of a serious nature, and inspired with a thoughtful turn of mind by love of his profession, the Emperor sought in every direction for knowledge, and for the development of the ideas and views germinating in his head, principally by conversing with those of his senior officers and comrades in whom he had remarked some superiority of intellect. The Revolution marched forward with giant strides; its ideas began to seethe in his young head as in many others. The corps in which he served was, by its composition and instructional

training, peculiarly susceptible to new impressions and notions. Napoleon watched the progress of the Revolution with enthusiasm, though he condemned not only its excesses, but also its mistakes, with more severity than one would have expected from his age. Although he was without any experience himself, the conduct of the Court seemed to him ill-chosen, false and, above all, weak. He was no Republican; he wanted a constitutional monarchy; he would have defended the King if the King had wished to be defended, although Louis and his Court did not appear to be acting in good faith. Like so many ardent royalists, Napoleon wished to have the way of promotion opened to merit, to have advancement possible without distinction of class, without the necessity of being the relation or friend of someone in high places or of invoking the patronage of a lady entitled to demand favours. He was quite unable to understand how the Princes of the Blood and the nobility could take refuge outside France while abandoning the King to danger. He was disgusted by the *émigrés* who wandered about Europe exhibiting their incapacity and immorality, instead of putting themselves at the head of a party in France or forming one that would rally the waverers to their side.

The Emperor would have ranged himself on the side of the *émigrés*, he said, if they had raised their standard in France and chosen prudent leaders to unite the ranks.

"The French," he went on, "never forgive cowardice, and it is cowardice to fly from danger and go to foreigners begging them for help against their country when they have such a noble cause to fight for at home. One should never wash dirty linen in public."

He had always been sorry for the King. All his concern was for him; he would have liked to have been able to defend him when his life was threatened.

"His death," said the Emperor, "seemed to me a disgrace to the nation, though, so far as that goes, the nation was innocent of the crime, for it was Coblenz that killed him. As for the King's judges," he went on, "with many of them it was fear rather than hatred or spite that inspired their sentence.

What I have already done at Saint-Denis,¹ and what I count upon doing at the Madeleine, will prove that I have always considered his death a crime, and that I thought so before I became a sovereign myself. Since I have worn a crown I have shown clearly enough that I mean to close the doors against revolution. The sovereigns of Europe are indebted to me for stemming the torrent of revolutionary spirit that threatened their thrones; but to prevent the evil breaking out again it is useless to rake up the memory of wrongs done at a time of general upheaval. People must be induced to forget, or remember only in order to prevent a recurrence. I am far from being an advocate of the Convention, but if anyone is to be called to account for the evils done at that time, it is not the men of the Convention, who were carried away by the frenzy of the time, but the Revolution which had been brought about by the Court itself. As a matter of strict justice the reckoning for our past misfortune should be laid to the Princes and men of the Court who caused the Revolution. The Montmorencies, the Lameths, the Aiguillons, the Talleyrands, the Lafayettes, the Rochefoucaulds, Monsieur (the King's brother), and many others were the real malefactors.

"These men," he went on, "ought to have laid down their lives on the steps of the throne instead of attacking it. Speaking generally, the nobility ought to have fought to the death instead of saving themselves by flight abroad, which was nothing but a convenient way of escaping danger by professing a false devotion. As for the others, those called revolutionaries, they belonged to a lower class which naturally wanted to raise itself. They looked after themselves, and circumstances proved stronger than they. Those who carried on intrigues abroad did more to bring about the death of the King than the Convention. To be perfectly just, it is impossible to say who is to blame for that death which is now known as the Cause of Sovereigns. The two million individuals who

¹ Napoleon had undertaken the restoration of the Basilica in 1805. After the violation of the royal tombs during the Revolution the church, robbed of lead on its roof, had served as a storehouse for wheat and flour.

clamoured for it in the addresses they sent up to the Convention were more guilty than many of those who were frightened into voting for it by the knives of the Paris Jacobins. My government has always acted on the principle that what happened prior to its establishment did not take place, always making an exception of services rendered. That is the principle to adopt in order to avert reaction, to quench all hatred and stifle revenge. The greatest seigneurs of the old regime, the leaders of the Emigration, those whose families have perished by the axe of the Revolution, dine with the Duke of Otranto and even have relations with him and Merlin,¹ not to speak of other revolutionaries. My government has brought about this fusion. Incomplete though they are, the institutions guarantee the existing state of affairs and are made for the benefit of the sovereign as much as of the people.

"I am designing a monument, however, which, without wounding the living, will honour the names of the dead, and will keep alive in the minds of our children sufficient memories of the unhappy times we have passed through, so that they shall know not to kill kings and that monarchs are not to be buried like private individuals."

The Emperor then asked me if I shared the general opinion that the Madeleine² was meant for a temple of Glory.

"You are the first," he told me, "to know all my ideas for this scheme. I have raised too many monuments to the immortal glory of the French for there to be any need thus to consecrate the Madeleine. I am not a pagan monarch. I have given enough proof of that, for none of the Kings of France, not even the most pious of them, did as much for religion as I have done. The re-establishment of the Church is due to me;

¹ Merlin de Douai who, like Fouché, had voted for the death of the King, was at that time Procurator-General at the Court of Cassation.

² It was in 1806 that Napoleon decided to erect the monument on the site of a church which had been started, demolished, started again and left unfinished. The design of the new structure was committed to Vignon. The big columns were raised so far as the astragals in 1815.

only power and a will like mine could have brought this about. Although I am not always in political agreement with the Pope, I venerate him from a religious point of view. I respect his character. I have great projects. Give me a year of peace and the development of my plans will amaze [*gap in original MS.*] like upstarts who date everything from their own time and dislike to hear their predecessors mentioned. I will contrast the glory of ancient with that of modern France, her old civilization with her new, the sciences and arts in which she had so long led the way in Europe with her present-day marvels; in fact, I will contrast her Kings with her Emperor. All illustrious men, of all ranks, of all conditions and all ages, belong to this fair France. They must mingle and speak to our children, calling forth their admiration as much as that of the rest of the world. I want no idols made of me, nor even any outdoor statues. It was to my great disgust, and without consulting me, that Denon had my statue made for the column in the Place Vendôme.¹ Indeed, it is very likely that I shall change this arrangement, although the publicity already given to the plan may make it inconvenient to make any alterations. They can do what they like after I am dead. If France attains to the summit of glory and prosperity that I design for her, they shall decree a statue in my honour, if they so desire. If I succumb in the carrying out of my enterprises, it is better that there should be nothing to expose to the criticism of the world. I want no homage in the form of flattery, nor, as happened to Louis XV, a statue that shall be exposed to public ridicule.² A nation, like history itself, rarely takes reckoning of anything but success."

The Emperor went on to say it would be impossible to raise a temple of Glory in a Christian country. Having achieved more than all the other generals or statesmen, and being

¹ Napoleon was furiously angry when it was projected to place his statue on the triumphal arch in the Carrousel. Cf. Lanzac de Larorie, *Paris sous Napoléon, II, Administration, grands travaux*, 182.

² It has been said about the equestrian statue of Louis XV, with its pedestal adorned with female figures representing the cardinal virtues, "The Virtues go on foot, Vice on horseback."

Emperor, people would not be slow to say, and perhaps with some degree of justification, that he had raised a fane in his own honour, that he was the real object of worship within it, under the conventional name of Glory. He repeated his words that glory was the heritage of all Frenchmen, that he would immortalize its memories in every monument, every establishment of public utility which he had created or was yet to create. It was upon reminders such as these that he rested his imperishable fame. Had he announced, in advance, the project of raising an expiatory monument to all the victims of the Revolution, especially to the most distinguished, he would have awakened unhappy memories and given offence to many men who, when the Revolution was finished, rendered eminent services to France and to whom—it ought never to be forgotten—France owed the honour and glory of having resisted the power of all Europe. Her legal codes and her good administration were partly their work.

“It is to the energy shown by several of these men that France owes the conclusion of the Reign of Terror,” he said. “By hurting the feelings of some of these men I should likewise wound the self-respect of their families and connections. Ultimately this would wound the susceptibility of the nation. Time brings things to pass imperceptibly; the great art is to act opportunely. As the monument of the Madeline will take some years to complete, I have time to make such preparations as shall ensure that its inauguration will fulfil my purpose without giving offence to anyone. From now onwards we shall enjoy peace. Our internal situation thus permitting of my completing our institutions, the great changes that I plan and that I shall then put into execution will distract public attention. The Senate will become a House of Peers, but in a truly national spirit. All things being so bound up together and simultaneously intermingled, no one will feel that his sensibilities have been wounded.”

The Emperor envisaged the peerage in the following manner. He had drawn the families of the old aristocracy into his service so that names that were famous in history, appearing side by side in our ranks with those associated with our

modern glory—taking the same chances with them and encountering the same dangers—should no longer be objects of jealousy with the old campaigners. His purpose had been to identify the youth of the old families with the glory and great deeds of modern days and thus bind the new and old names in a personal pride in the most recent events. He wished to place them in such a situation that he might with justice mend the fortunes of several who had fallen on hard times.

It was contrary to his wishes for a Montmorency to be poor when Ney was rich. It was not right that the nephew of Cambacérès, if he should come into the title and fortune of his uncle, should splash an Aguesseau or a Molé with the mud from his carriage wheels. Nor did he want the Gazans, Labordes, Durosnel, Corbineaus, Gérards, Foys, Lamarques, Clauzels to be worse off than the foremost of our military families. Gaudin and Mollien belonged to France and her history as much as the Colberts and Louvois. In itself the peerage was nothing; to many it would be simply the shameful supremacy of a few if it did not offer the nation some considerable guarantee in exchange for its privileges. For this reason it must be hereditary. It was according to his intention to make it hereditary, in most cases, unless death removed certain members of the Senate who could not expect hereditary honours, and whose grant of such would upset his plans.

But time was necessary for him to make the fortunes of those who had a right to a peerage and were not wealthy enough to keep up the position. He spoke of men of the old stamp and of the new stamp. All the notabilities would be admitted to the peerage. It was for this purpose that he would retain his "extraordinary domain"¹ and devote the annual revenue from it to increase the capital: for he did not

¹ The "extraordinary domain," created by the *Senatus-Consultum* of January 30, 1810, consisted of the portable and fixed valuables acquired by conquest and treaty. The Emperor disposed of the revenues according to his sovereign will, either on the Army, or for the encouragement and reward of eminent civil or military services rendered to the State.

intend this Chamber of Peers to be a charge on the State. The peerage would carry no privileges outside the Chamber, nor would noble rank give any, the social distinction being nothing but a question of title and thus in no way offending national ideas. The law must be the same for all. Otherwise the idea of a peerage would so shock public opinion that it would rather bring down on its recipients a torrent of public hatred than confer on them the distinction of holding a title. The door of promotion to all posts and functions being open to merit, no matter what a man's extraction or condition of life, the nation would be less offended by his creation of titles. There could be no question of the need for instituting this distinction, yet no act of his had made him more enemies.

As the career lay open for any soldier to become a general, a baron, a duke and then a marshal; or for the son of any peasant, schoolmaster, lawyer or local mayor to become councillor of state, minister and duke, this peerage would, in time, cease to offend any susceptibilities, as it would afford a means of rewarding everyone, without distinction.

It was his intention to summon to the peerage all the leading notables, so that the French people, whom he had been the first to proclaim as a great nation, should feel itself honoured in the selection of its most distinguished men, who would, moreover, have sufficient means to be independent; for those who are governed have no guarantee of safety if their representatives lack the first element of independence, especially in a country like France where property must necessarily be the first condition for any form of eminence.

He went on to say that many people thought him violent and despotic because he had an adamant will; yet at the Council of State, when the Code was being discussed, he had been the most moderate of all those present. It was to him that France owed the Code which would be her eternal glory, the envy of all other peoples and the object of admiration to posterity. He might have let things remain in the chaos in which they had been left by the old regime and made worse by the Revolution, and have ruled the country as he pleased.

As it was, no one could deny that France was governed by law.

"That is sufficient answer to make," he said, "to those who construe my firmness of will as despotism."

The Emperor cited several examples of officials and magistrates being dismissed and censured for having been drawn into taking measures or making arbitrary decisions through a mistaken zeal or ill-considered notions of government. He said once again that his principle of government, his own tendency and that of his Council of State, was to uphold, so far as justice allowed, the weak against the strong, and, as a corollary of this, the private individual against the authorities, who, having power on their side, were prone to encroach and carry off things with a high hand. As a broad principle, to his Ministers he insisted on the necessity of being vigilant, that the authorities should prevent evil rather than be obliged to punish it. The people who observed, and were in a position to judge, his government realized perfectly well that the repute in which his strength of will was held served him more than his reputation for severity.

"Everything goes to prove this," he went on. "It is said that I love power. Well, has anyone, in any department, cause for complaint? Never have the prisons been so empty. Does anyone complain of a prefect without obtaining justice? Forty-five out of every fifty complaints are decided against the prefects. The government is strong, my hand is steady, and the officials are sensible that I shall not slacken the reins. So much the better for the people, for while this system traces out a definite path for each to follow, my watchfulness inspires the authorities with vigilance; officials fulfil their duties; all citizens and all forms of property are equally well protected. The roads have never been safer. Thanks to me there are no more squabbles, no more petty spites, no more parties. Such things are no longer known in France. I have never wished to be anyone's man, I have never sought support from public opinion nor from any class of men. I rely on myself, on the results of what I have successively created in the interests of France, on my institutions, on the moral effect of a government

that is not swayed by outside opinions. Whether as First Consul or as Emperor, I have been the people's king; I have governed for the nation and in its interests, without allowing myself to be turned aside by the outcries or the private interests of certain people. This is well known throughout France, and the French people love me. I say the French people, and by that I mean the nation, for I have never shown undue favour to the class that some folk understand by the word 'people' — the dregs of the populace. Nor have I shown favour to the landed gentry, for if the unenlightenment and miseries of the former make them very prone to create disorders, so do the pretensions of the latter render them quite as dangerous to those in authority. Constantly restive against any sort of power that does not emanate from themselves, if they dared they would be in a continuous state of revolt. Are they not always preaching, in every salon of the undisciplined Faubourg Saint-Germain, the revolt that they dare not raise? It is the same now as in the days of the League. The leaders of the Vendée fought better for their own privileges than for the rights of the Crown. The unfortunate people is always the dupe. It was the pretensions of the petty squires, even more than those of the greater gentry, that kept that war going. An aristocracy is necessary for France, but it must be on a different basis from that of the old one, which has become incompatible with the new regime. Woe to the sovereign who delivers himself into the hands of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, for it has not changed its nature! Into whatever excesses the Revolution may have been swept, the populace has generally been found to have bowels of mercy. The Faubourg Saint-Germain has none. It wants to reconquer an influence which it imagines belongs to it by right. In its opinion, kings are its own choice, the people are its vassals. Kings must govern by its authority and in its interests, and the people must obey. That is the limit to which the *grands seigneurs* would permit the king to go, if the good old times were ever to return. At one time the Faubourg thought I was its Messiah and would have taken me up. I am still acceptable in their eyes for lack of a better and because they hope my son will prove more manage-

able than myself. Not daring to rise in revolt, they have submitted without being converted. It matters little to me. As the children of this old aristocracy grow up they will form fresh ideas, they will see that what I offer them is more suitable to the present age than that which their fathers want to restore. The small country landowners, too, will find it advantageous to submit, and my institutions will do the rest. Some of them, perceiving that I wish to be a protector to all classes, have withdrawn apart. They will come back, for above all else they like power and the Court. If they keep up their attitude they may find it too late. At the moment these folk are almost ready to make common cause with such hare-brained visionaries as Lafayette and Tracy,¹ who cry out against despotism as though the very fact that they can protest, intrigue and criticize at their ease were not proof enough that no such thing as despotism exists in France."

The Emperor said once again that the weight of his authority was only felt by public officials; that beyond these preliminary wheels of government his influence was imperceptible; that the Law and the independent tribunals administered everything. His government, he said, possessed the great advantage of containing no parties, corporations or groups of people with personal interests to come between it and the nation. There was no caste or class to interpose between the people and the government, whereas under the old regime the nobility, with their pretensions, their privileges and interests, which extended down to the justice meted out by their bailiffs, all came between the common people and those who ruled them. Moreover, the old nobility kept in their own gift and appointment all public posts, whereas now nobility was no more than a nominal distinction, carrying with it respectability but no authority, since a title gave no claim to any office. The Emperor repeated that he acknowledged all claims to pre-eminence equally.

"The Legion of Honour," he said, "is the finest of my

¹ Destutt de Tracy, faithful friend of Lafayette, was a senator, member of the Académie Française, and Count of the Empire.

institutions. It is, with all due deference to poor Moreau and his dreams,¹ one of the greatest conceptions of modern times, and as well suited to the needs of the Throne as to those of the people. It establishes a fraternity of honour between the civil and the military, between the marshal and the private, between the peasant and the duke. I am the only man alive who knows the French thoroughly, as well as the needs of the peoples and of European society.

"The old regime was full of excellent things which now need only to be adapted to modern conditions. Those people who think that they have a right to interpose themselves between the people and the Emperor do as much harm as the Jacobins, who desired no government of any sort, or at best an authority so split up that it was tantamount to none at all, our habits and failings being what they are. If I had accepted the beliefs of the Jacobins I should have founded a government on the lines of that established in the United States; but I knew France too well not to see that such a thing would be impossible. The lessons we have learned from the Directory have shown this clearly enough. Others, such as Lannes, who had no fixed ideas, would have liked liberty for themselves and their friends, but none for those who held opposite views. The security of the Consul or President would have depended on the loyalty of the Guard.¹ Pretorian guards are greedy, insatiable, and are a heavier drag on the people than on the sovereign. I did not consider that method of governing suitable. Relying on the support of partisans, one becomes a despot despite oneself; and this form of power was repugnant to me. I threw off that yoke soon after I was made First Consul. My eyes were opened to the embezzlement carried on by the Guard. It is impossible to give any idea of what was going on. Being unable to obtain any accounts, I dismissed the chiefs who tried to hamper me by forming round

¹ General Moreau's opposition to the institution of the Legion of Honour is well known, as also the story of his decorating his cook with a casserole of honour. Cf. Remacle, *Rélations secrètes*, 238

¹ Lannes was gazetted Commandant and Inspector of the Consular Guard, April 16, 1800.

me a ring of apparently devoted men, as though one could govern France by such means.

"There was a desire to get rich, to become indispensable. For my part I wished to extricate France from the abyss into which she had been plunged by the muddle-headedness of the Directory and the Revolution. I was keenly sensible of the good I wanted to accomplish, of the need France had of me and of the confidence that this generous nation inspired in me."

The Emperor spoke once again of the difference that existed between his administration and that of the old regime. "The nation obtains all its necessary guarantees," he said, "in the selection of its officials who come without any kind of distinction from its own ranks and who, as they can have no claim to permanent employment but are liable to be dismissed at any moment, are anxious not to expose themselves to the reproaches of their fellow-citizens. The real responsibility rests upon these men. It could rest in but an illusory way upon men placed in administrative posts through claims of birth or some inherited right, as was heretofore the case."

The Emperor spoke further about the re-establishment of religion, the creation of titles, and the institution of the Legion of Honour. Considerable courage and strength of character had been necessary, he said, to carry through these creations. Though they were eminently in the interests of France and even in the individual interest of those who opposed their creation, yet the Revolution had left a heritage of prejudice, and there were few intelligent men sufficiently broad-minded to grasp those great political questions which are at the root of all State institutions. He went on to say that he had been obliged to exercise all his persistence before he could overcome suspicion. The nobility he had created was only a bauble, a pre-eminence in name just as wealth was a positive one. Actual pre-eminence would exist only in the case of the nobles who formed part of the Chamber of Peers, and in the precincts of the Chamber itself which would have the right of veto. The Senate had been merely a form of transition; a life institution

of that kind offered no guarantee to the nation, which required a body of men possessed of the importance which only fortune and independence could bestow. The Senate, moreover, was in need of new blood. A silly and feeble opposition existed on its benches, inspired by a few men who disliked anything in the nature of government; but it lacked virility, and possessed no breadth of outlook or nobility of mind.

Reverting to the subject of the Senate, the Emperor said that it was composed of nothing but spent torches or dark lanterns which would lead the country on the wrong road, even if it overcame its greater difficulties. The greater part of the Senators would, if the occasion arose, imitate Frochot,¹ who liked him, if the Duke of Bassano was to be believed, but who had none the less shown not the slightest objection to having a room in his house prepared as the council chamber for the government that was to be set up by Malet and Lahorie. What Frochot wanted was to remain Prefect of Paris. The continual changes of government since the Revolution have made men too familiar with such a state of things. This is an evil which only time will cure.

"Not only does Frochot owe everything to me, he has also sworn fidelity. Yet, when he believed that I was dead he was faithless to my son and to his oath, though he considered himself no less an honest man. If he had promised you a hundred millions he would have paid you on the appointed day. Nothing would make him fail his given word, yet he broke his oath without the slightest scruple. Such are the men and the notions begotten by the times we live in. Who is to be trusted?"

My remarks directed the conversation to various things that have caused discontent in France, notably conscription, into which the needs of continual warfare have swept all those who compose the classes liable to service. The Emperor replied:

¹ Frochot was Prefect of the Seine and was mixed up in the Malet affair. On his arrival in Paris Napoleon replaced him by M. de Chabrol. Frochot had been given the post of Prefect on March 2, 1808, on Maret's recommendation.

"I agree that conscription is a law bearing harshly upon families, on account of the frequent calls which circumstances have caused me to make; but it is national, because it allows of neither privilege nor exception. In times of peace it will even become popular, for the French love the career of arms, and as the door to promotion is open to ability and courage, an honourable career will thereby be opened to many young men. In this, as in so many things, the appreciation of principles of equality gives strength to the government and ensures success to the levies. If I granted exemption to one single conscript, if there was a single privilege granted to anyone, no matter whom, not one man would obey the order to march. The notions of equality that made the Revolution are to-day an integral part of the government's strength. It is because no one anticipates or suspects any preferential treatment and because it has no interest in showing favouritism that the government inspires no distrust. Public confidence in the justice of its dealings gives it as much authority as the exercise of its power. That is the secret of my success. It is said that I love war, but as its charges are laid upon all alike, as I show no preference for anyone and recompense all alike who show courage, everyone submits to it. To inspire people with supreme confidence in my sense of justice, to convince them that I favour no man's interest above that of his neighbour, there lies the grand secret of how to govern the French. That is my all-powerful lever."

The Emperor made another remark to the effect that a Frenchman is a fault-finder by nature.

"Society in the salons," he said, "is always in a state of hostility against the government. Everything is criticized and nothing praised. Although society men and women are in general courtiers, and the greater numbers of them frankly flatterers, even in their chattering they are none the less inimical to the government in power. There was a great outcry because I happened to banish from Paris for a few months certain persons who would have had to be arrested a fortnight later if I had not sent them out of the country in time and had

not in that way brought their intrigues to naught.¹ That is what they call my tyranny. I am said to be a tyrant because I will not allow a few schemers and fools to get themselves talked about as conspirators; their plots make me laugh, and I would let them come to a head if it did not mean that I should have to exercise severity, whereas it is my desire to be firm, and not harsh. Under the old regime no one at Versailles was willing to obey. This sort of privilege ruined and discredited the Court. Mistresses and favourites were all intriguing to make or unmake Ministers, for they knew that the sovereign was weak; this was actually conspiring against his authority.

"Did it not reach the point of risking our fame just for the sake of ruining such-and-such a General or Minister, without a thought of the blood that this treasonable behaviour would cost France and the consequences that a defeat might bring upon the country? Robbery was carried on with impunity in those days, if one had a certain amount of credit and the support of a few men in office. The entire Court, even the Princes of the Blood, were interested in business enterprises or took allowances from contractors. Money was made out of everything. The streets of Paris were badly kept and even worse lighted because the Princes, notably the Comte d'Artois and the highest of the nobility, accepted commission or pensions from the scavenging and lighting contractors. I have proof of this in my possession.

"Such an abuse as this," he continued, "is unknown in my government. There are no gratuities, so far as I am aware. Men are paid good salaries, they are paid regularly, and it is well known that I should show no mercy to swindlers, still less to officials who did business on their own account. Never has the Treasury been in such good order. It has been necessary to make examples. Sometimes the delinquents have been men who were connected with prominent personages; but I have studied no considerations of that sort. Feeling

¹ See in the *Mémorial*, 1823 ed., III, 4176, for what Napoleon said about Madame de Chevreuse's exile. "She hoped to start the Fronde insurrection again, but I was not a minor on the throne."

myself strong enough to do what was right, I have gone on to my goal allowing nothing to turn me aside, paying no heed to the outcries of various cliques. Who makes an outcry in France?" he went on. "A few salons, a few people who have soon forgotten their debt to me for the position or fortune they now enjoy, others whom I have brought back from exile and restored to their property, which they would never have recovered but for me; a few obscure lordlings who are discontented at no longer being sprinkled with holy water on Sundays; a number of self-centred shopkeepers who are under a cloud at the moment because they can find no scope for speculation; some army contractors, veritable bloodsuckers whose ill-gotten gains I have made them disgorge. These are the people who cry out against me. The mass of the nation is just; the nation sees that I am striving for its good fame, its happiness, its future. What can I personally wish for? Born of a distinguished class, though of an unlucky family, I now occupy the greatest throne in the world. I have given law to the whole of Europe.

"To make the fortunes of those who have served France well, I have furnished millions without touching the State revenues. In my privy purse, and in the 'extraordinary domain' I possess all the money and treasure that a man could possibly desire; but I have no need of money for myself. No one is less occupied than I in personal affairs.

"That France should prosper under my government is the object of my desires, of my ambition, of my entire attention. It is I who have re-established order, regulated finance, paid the country's debts. I am becoming too heavy and stout not to like rest or have need of it, nor to feel seriously wearied by the constant movement and activity demanded by warfare. As with all men, my physical condition affects my mental state. You tell me, and everyone likes to believe it, that I love glory and war, that I envisage what you call universal monarchy. But this universal empire is a dream, and I have awakened from it. If, once upon a time, I might have been carried away by this warlike passion, it would, like all passions, have misled me for but a moment.

"This war with Russia is an unfortunate affair," said the Emperor, seeking to tweak my ear in a friendly way. "I was mistaken, my Master of the Horse, not as to the object or political aims of this war, but as to the method of waging it. I should have remained at Witepsk. By now Alexander would have been on his knees to me. The dividing of the Russian Army after the crossing of the Niemen amazed me. As the Russians had not been able to defeat us in any direction, and as Kutusoff had been forced on the Tsar in place of Barclay, who was the better soldier, I imagined that a people who did not know how to fight and a sovereign who allowed a bad General to be foisted on him would certainly ask for terms. I stayed a fortnight too long at Moscow. This will result in it being said that the Russians are invincible in their own country, because of their climate; but it will be wrong, for with better foresight, if I had followed my original plan, they would have been lost."

The Emperor added that people entirely misunderstood his character. He was essentially a man of reason and not of imagination. This failure to comprehend him arose from not understanding his views. He owed it to no one to give an account of the means employed to attain the ends he had in mind. His character was positive. Even if he were not hindered by obstacles that limited the horizon of other people, he only devoted himself to what was possible and also truly great, and therefore useful. Everything was, consequently, a question of calculation, the outcome of reasoning. Habitually exercising greater foresight and deeper calculation than others, he weighed things in advance and for a long time.

"I weighed carefully and for a long time," he said, "all the sacrifices that would be entailed by this struggle with England. Definitely, in this struggle lies the basic solution of all the questions that are now agitating the world and even individuals. It is not I," he went on, "who have lost the colonies nor let the navies of Europe be destroyed. On the contrary, it is I who have toiled unceasingly to re-establish them. I have my ship-building yards everywhere. In two years' time you will be amazed at the number of my vessels

at the development and strength of my armaments. It was the Revolution that made the power of England. I found her preponderance already established. I strengthened it by signing the Peace of Amiens and doing nothing against the spirit of that treaty. The expedition of San Domingo proved conclusively that I had no other thought in mind save to maintain the peace and internal prosperity of France, for I sent the very pick of the army to that distant colony.¹ It was England who violated the treaty, it was she who stole the entire wealth of our commerce at a time of profound peace. I maintained this peace in order to have time to create a navy which might protect our rights and defend our property, because political equilibrium depends on the commercial balance being kept even. Up to a certain point national strength is as much a question of money as of territory, and consequently lies in the relative power of states no less than in the size of their population. To maintain this equilibrium, so essential to every interest, one must be in a position to force England to consider what she is risking before she starts playing the pirate on continental shipping without a declaration of war.

He added that it had never crossed his mind to break the Treaty of Amiens; that he only wanted to be in a position not to receive affronts when he had no intention of giving them. He realized too keenly the advantages of a maritime peace, and the influence it exerted on the internal prosperity and tranquillity of Europe, ever to have thought of disturbing it. Instead of loyally throwing down the gauntlet, England had started the war in a most iniquitous manner; and thus it was the cause of good faith, of Europe and of commerce generally that he was fighting to defend. The measures taken by the English had forced him to take reprisals.

"It is, indeed, for the most cherished interests of Europe that I am now fighting, and demanding so many sacrifices from France," said the Emperor. "I have the foresight of a wise politician, whereas the other sovereigns are simply

¹ An allusion to the 1802 expedition, commanded by Leclerc, to reconquer the island from Toussaint-Louverture.

blinded by fear that has no foundation. They seem to fear nothing but the power of France, while it is France alone who can defend the commercial liberties of Europe. The old balance of power no longer exists and the old methods can never restore it. In the world of to-day everything is altered, changed, rejuvenated. New paths have to be opened out. If the Cabinets of Europe were to go into these matters they would appreciate my efforts instead of being disquieted by them. By openly seconding me they would meet with less vexations and the goal would be sooner reached. I have only one goal before me; that is, peace with England, which means a general peace. Without that peace all others are but truces. In another year, or even less, if I had not miscarried in Russia, the Continent would have been more than indemnified for the sacrifices I have asked of it. Never have I concealed from myself the fact that it was a vast undertaking. If I failed, the harm that the Continent was bound to suffer in consequence would soon demonstrate the importance of the end I wanted to achieve. The Russian alliance did not prove as useful to me as I expected. It was not enough to close the North of Europe to English commerce if the Levant remained open to her vessels. To gain the end in view it would have been necessary to launch a great attack against her, simultaneously with threatening her power in India and at least closing the Levantine waters. But the execution of this project presented more difficulties than I anticipated. Each state has its own particular interests. A great Power cannot devote its energies to a cause of only secondary importance. It was essential that the Tsar Alexander should be willing to enter whole-heartedly into the spirit of the Treaty of Tilsit. The closing of his ports, which he immediately reopened for neutral contraband, failed to alarm England. The only way left of doing harm to England was to undermine her credit, and that required time. Being a pastoral country, Russia was bound to suffer from the interruption of commerce, and was hard put to it to await the result. It needed a stronger will than that of the Tsar to persuade the nation to stand fast and wait for better times. In

France I have created internal industries that have replaced her foreign commerce. This could not be done in Russia, where everything moves slowly. The great inconvenience for this Empire is the lack of any but paper money, and paper of which the market price, one might almost say the value, depends on the confidence of foreign exchanges. In short, a great number of circumstances have combined to thwart my plans and deceive my expectations."

I spoke to the Emperor about the loss of the Spanish fleet,¹ and of her colonies,² as a result of the invasion.

"One cannot always be successful," he replied. "I was badly seconded, wrongly informed and deceived in that affair. Everything that I did not expect happened, but as is always the case, these inconveniences saved me from others. There were compensations. Undoubtedly I was forced to a greater deployment of forces and to more expense than I had expected, but at the same time I forced England to expenses and sacrifices in far greater proportion, and much more onerous for them than for me. In the actual circumstances it was something to have drawn all her forces to Spain and kept them there. I certainly felt the loss of the Spanish fleet, but the seamen remained. This country lacks no material for building another fleet. A few years of peace will repair all that damage."

For the moment the Emperor did not open his mind further in reply to my observations on the loss of the Spanish colonies and her fleet. The conversation reverted to the subject of England.

"If it were possible to have a three or four years' truce," he said, "Europe would very soon perceive what a rival

¹ Spain had declared war on England on December 14, 1804, and on January 5, 1805, signed a naval convention with France agreeing to the use of her fleet. Part of this, under the command of the Duke of Gravina, was destroyed or captured at Trafalgar; another squadron, composed of six men-of-war under Juste Salcedo, was blockaded for three years in Cartagena harbour.

² Notwithstanding their hankering after independence, which is the subject of the remarks above, at first the Spanish colonies took sides with Ferdinand VII. Cf. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, I, 368.

influence that Power exerts, what an enemy she is to commerce and what a heavy burden her monopoly imposes. Before long we shall see the votes of Germany challenging the prohibitive system that is suffered to-day with such repugnance, and demanding vengeance on this foreign government that proves such an enemy of any kind of industry, on this colossus of commerce that can only exist on its debts and subsidies or face its expenses by the monopoly it enforces against other nations. But by then it will be too late. Europe will never again be situated as favourably as to-day. The period of quiet will only render these sacrifices more painful. The capital that has been amassed as a result of peace will be put in jeopardy, and to avoid losing it all it will be necessary to resign oneself to suffering things to remain as they are. I seized the only available instant. I acted as a wise and far-seeing policy dictated. Had I done otherwise, I should have earned the undying reproaches of posterity and history."

The Emperor insisted at some length on the possible advantages of the situation created by the events that had ranged the United States against England.¹ He had no doubt that the actual struggle would end to the advantage of the former.² He considered this to be the real turning-point of their political emancipation and their development as a great Power. He talked of the respective methods of aggression and defence, as well as of the endeavours that England might make, but he came to the conclusion that reverses at some points, where they might be caught unawares, would simply arouse the Americans and temper the national spirit.

"The English," he said, "will end by subscribing to all that the Americans desire, and the American government,

¹ The United States declared war against England on June 18, 1812. The cause of this war was the refusal of the English Cabinet to abolish the Order in Council which made it necessary for all neutral vessels to call in at London or Malta for permission to navigate.

² The English-American War was brought to a conclusion by Jackson's crushing defeat of the English at New Orleans, January 8, 1815.

placed in the hands of able statesmen, will gain increased strength. It will profit by the opportunity to make the nation give it the means of organizing and maintaining a larger army, of forming the nucleus of a permanent force, and will obtain more facilities for assembling and forming a militia. If the Americans are wise they will build forts, even strong fortresses, at certain important points, and this will be of the utmost service to them in the future. This juncture," he said, "will give the United States an anti-English turn that will strengthen our French system, and in the future that country will be England's most powerful adversary. Before thirty years have passed it will make her tremble."

These considerations led the Emperor to speak of the emancipation of the Spanish colonies, which he regarded as a certainty, and something ultimately advantageous to our interests, although for the moment their revolt from the mother country offered to England a useful commercial outlet that would save her industry from its threatened ruin. In the great States that were being formed in the New World he envisaged fresh rivals to England. According to him, there was every reason why these new countries should fit in with the political system of the United States. The independence of all colonial possessions seemed to him a natural consequence of the action of the Spanish colonies; and he considered that the time when this would happen was not far distant. As a whole, it appeared to him that these changes would prove to our political and commercial interest if we could seize the first possible moment to establish good relations with those countries. War with the mother country and the prejudices that would be aroused thereby ought to facilitate the forming of good relations between us and the revolted colonies rather than prove an obstacle. As their primary desire was to cast off their old yoke, the self-interest of these new states would induce them not to grant any exclusive privileges, but to seek direct relations with all the maritime states of Europe. The very war that England was waging in Spain, ostensibly for the cause of Ferdinand, would prejudice her government in its relations with the new countries. It was improbable that

they would proclaim a Spanish prince. He thought they were more likely to form a republic on the model of the United States, or would put at the head some of the chief men who had fought for their independence. He cited the United States, which, peopled by Englishmen, are nevertheless the most violent enemies to England, and from this he concluded that the peoples of the New World would be as anti-Spanish as the inhabitants of New York are anti-English, and that those nations would be equally anti-English if England continued to support Spain. He doubted whether she would do this, as the English Minister considered only the real interests of the country.

This conversation, from my record of which I have suppressed many details of less importance than the points I have noted, brought us to Görlitz.¹ From that town I sent Amodru in advance to warn Baron de Serra, our Minister at Dresden,² of our approach. I told him that the Emperor would sup and sleep at his house, and that he was to inform the King of Saxony³ that His Majesty would go to see him incognito. The snow had drifted to such depths in the valleys that our progress was slow. When, at last, we reached the posting-house of Bautzen,⁴ we were kept waiting so long for fresh horses that I had to alight from the sledge and go in person to ascertain the reason of the delay. This was occasioned by nothing more than the habitual dilatoriness of the postmaster, and the prevalent bad habit of giving the horses their feed just when the traveller arrived. In vain did I urge the postmaster to hasten matters. There was nothing to be done but exercise patience and get warm while waiting. The Emperor took the opportunity to snatch a nap for three-quarters of an hour; for my part, I took notes of the interesting conversations I had just had with His Majesty.

¹ On the Neisse.

² Jean Charles François, Baron de Serra, was born at Genoa, August 29, 1780. Minister of France at the Court of the King of Saxony. He had previously been French Resident at Warsaw.

³ Frederick Augustus I.

⁴ On the Spree.

From Dresden to Paris

WE did not reach Dresden until midnight.¹ Our postilion, who had assured me that he knew where the French Minister lived, spent so long driving us up and down the town without finding it that at last I grew impatient and ordered him to stop and make inquiries. But everyone was asleep. The whole place was in darkness and we had to go on a long way before we could see a lighted window. The postilion knocked at the door and rang the bell for some time before a man, wearing a nightcap, put his head out of the window and asked what we wanted. Upon our asking him to direct us to the French Minister's house, the doctor (for such he was, as I subsequently learned) shut his window with a bang, evidently considering that he was under no obligation to expose himself to the cold by talking to people in good health. So we had to resume our exploration of the town for some considerable time in search of a constable. Luckily we met a Saxon who proved more obliging than the doctor. He conducted us to M. de Serra's door where we found everything ready, as though he had been waiting for us. The Emperor started work at once. He dictated to me despatches to the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel, several orders for Warsaw and a despatch for Vienna.²

¹ At two o'clock in the morning, according to Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 199). This is the same hour as given by M. de Serra, but these two persons are speaking of the time of his arrival at the residence of the French Minister, whereas Caulaincourt is referring to his arrival in Dresden, and, as the text shows, a certain interval elapsed between the two events. This was the night of December 13-14, 1812.

² See Napoleon's letter to Francis I, dated from Dresden, December 14th (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19385) and another to Frederick-William of Prussia, of the same date, in *Dernières lettres inédites de Napoléon Ier*, II, 287.

When he had finished his correspondence the Emperor left us to the task of sending it off. He supped and went to bed, telling me to wake him when the King of Saxony arrived, for that sovereign did not want His Majesty to be put to the trouble of going to the palace.¹ While he took his rest, M. de Serra helped me send off the despatches.

The Emperor had been asleep for an hour when the King of Saxony appeared,² accompanied by Counts de Loss³ and Marcolini.⁴ He insisted on His Majesty receiving him in bed, consequently I had the honour of taking the King immediately to his apartment. The two sovereigns were together for three-quarters of an hour.⁵

Instructions had already been given for the continuation of our journey through Saxony. Our sledge was not in a fit state to proceed farther,⁶ so the King lent the Emperor his berline fitted with runners.⁷ After I had had the honour of

¹ As soon as he arrived the Emperor sent Wonsowicz to the palace to announce to the King that His Majesty was preparing to pay him a visit. Frederick-Augustus rose from his bed at once, and without waiting for one of his own carriages to be brought round he hurriedly took a sedan chair from the public stand nearby and was carried to the French Minister's house. (*Bourgoing, Souvenirs militaires*, 197.)

² At three o'clock in the morning. (Serra to Maret, December 21, 1812. *Archives du département des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance politique, Saxe*, Vol. 83, 145.)

³ Jean-Adolphe, Count de Loss, born at Dresden, May 16, 1768, died at Dresden, May 7, 1852. He had been Minister of State to the Elector of Saxony and was Grand Marshal of the Court.

⁴ Count Camillo Marcolini, Minister of State, born at Fano (States of the Church), April 2, 1739, died at Prague, July 20, 1814.

⁵ "The meeting of the two sovereigns was very affectionate." (*Bourgoing, Souvenirs militaires*, 199.)

⁶ When I returned to Dresden in 1813 I was assured that an Englishman had bought it as an historical relic, and that everyone had come to look at it when the Allies were in occupation. (*Note by Caulaincourt*.)

⁷ "As the sledge which had served the Emperor up to that moment could go no farther, it was replaced by a Court carriage mounted on runners; this vehicle was provisioned from the palace cellars and kitchens." (*Bourgoing, Souvenirs militaires*, 199.)

accompanying the King to his carriage¹ the Emperor told me that he would start at five o'clock and bid me awake him at half-past four, in time to sign his letters before taking his seat in the carriage.² At his orders I wrote to Baron Saint-Aignan, his Minister at Weimar,³ instructing him to prepare

¹ While the King was with the Emperor the chairmen who had carried him thither had gone back to the palace to order a carriage to be sent round to take the King home. (*Ibid.*, 199.)

² They did not start, however, until seven o'clock, on the morning of the 14th. (Serra Maret, Dresden, December 21, 1812, *loc. cit.*) Bourgoing even says eight o'clock. Here is the account Serra despatched to Maret (*Archives des affaires étrangères, Correspondance politique, Saxe*, Vol. 83, 137): "I was about to despatch my letter dated yesterday when a courier coming from Glogau pulled up at my door, at eleven o'clock at night, and said that he left at a short distance behind him the Master of the Horse, Duke of Vicenza. The letter he brought me, which was, in fact, from the Duke, informed me as to the identity of the person who, passing under the Duke's name and actually accompanied by him, was due to arrive at my door at any moment. I took all the steps that such short notice rendered possible, as well as issuing the necessary orders for the continuation of their journey. I had the inexpressible happiness of receiving and entertaining His Imperial and Royal Majesty in my house; he arrived at two o'clock in the morning and deigned to sup and sleep for some time beneath my roof. He started at seven o'clock in the morning by the Leipzig road."

³ Nicolas Auguste Marie Rousseau, Baron, and subsequently Count, de Saint-Aignan, born at Nantes, March 8, 1770, died at Paris, May 21, 1858. Originally intended for the Navy, he entered the Army and was promoted Lieutenant in the Artillery Regiment of Toul, September 1, 1786; Captain, February 6, 1792, he resigned his commission on May 15th of that year. Not having emigrated, he entered the service again, November 7, 1805, as Major in the Isenbourg Regiment, and became Caulaincourt's aide-de-camp, September 23, 1806. Baron of the Empire, December 31, 1809, Equerry to the Emperor, December 21, 1810. In December 1811 he was appointed French Minister at Weimar, with instructions to keep an eye on the doings of the petty German princes. Prisoner of war in 1813, he returned to France in 1814 charged with the important mission mentioned in the preface to this work. M. de Saint-Aignan was Caulaincourt's brother-in-law, having married the Duke's sister, Augustine-Amicie de Caulaincourt, widow of M. de Thelusson. Under Louis-Philippe he became one of the Generals of the National Guard of Paris and Peer of France (September 11, 1835).

his carriage and have it ready at Erfurt. For two relays we were drawn by horses from the Court,¹ and near Leipzig we passed the couriers who had been sent on to have horses ready for us in my name. So we were obliged to stay in that town to let them get ahead of us. Dusk was falling. While supper was being prepared the Emperor had the curiosity to stroll about the square and in the gardens outside the city. We stayed outdoors for a couple of hours; the cold was much less intense than in Poland.²

During the journey that we had just made the Emperor talked about the Tsar Alexander, Erfurt, the Duke of Abrantès, the peerage and the hatred in which the nobility were held. What I am about to record is the gist of several conversations in the course of which he repeated the same things. He spoke in praise of Count Daru.

"He works like a horse," he said; "he is a man of rare capacity, my best administrator. He has never asked me for anything. He administered Prussia and the conquered territories with a tact and delicacy of feeling of which he alone has given the example.³ In an enemy country he lived at his own expense, not even benefiting by the advantages enjoyed by others, and which he was entitled to claim. I took care to recompense him for his disinterestedness."

¹ "When the Emperor's carriage left Dresden it was followed by a sledge in which the King of Saxony sent, as escort, two sergeants of his guard." (Bourgoing, *Souvenirs militaires*, 201.)

² Basing his story on Wonsowicz's narrative, Bourgoing gives a much fuller account of this stay at Leipzig than Caulaincourt. According to Bourgoing, Napoleon put up for some hours at the Hôtel de Prusse, where he received the French Consul, M. Thérémmin, talked with him for a long time and dined with him. For this interesting conversation see Bourgoing (*Itinéraire de Napoléon, Ier*, 77). From the details given subsequently in Caulaincourt's narrative, as well as in Bourgoing's, it seems that the Emperor reached Leipzig between four o'clock and six on the afternoon of December 14th, and started again at seven o'clock.

³ Count Bruno Daru had been appointed Quartermaster-General of the Grand Army and of the conquered countries in 1806, and in the same year became French Minister at Berlin.

The Emperor returned to the subject of Tilsit. He had found an ideology in the Tsar Alexander, and ill-digested notions as to his situation; but he was actuated by excellent intentions: though he lacked experience. The emotions which estranged him from his wife¹ had filled him with false ideas even to the need experienced by nations and great States for an heir to the dynasties which ruled over them. These notions had apparently carried him to the length of admitting advantages in an elective monarchy dependent on merit, whereas hereditary succession more often placed on the throne an incapable, ill-trained fool. The Tsar Alexander felt no regret at his Empress having borne him no children. In general, he substituted all the virtues of good nature for those resulting from clear reasoning. He was a conscientious private individual, not a prince. In his childlessness he saw only one responsibility the less, and a responsibility which by his love of what was right seemed to him a serious burden. He was apparently imbued with the idea that monarchs ought to govern for the people, and are instituted for the people.

"That is also my maxim," added the Emperor, dwelling on this principle as if he suspected me of doubting it, and wished to convince me. "Instead of enjoying it, the Tsar appeared to me to be weary of sovereign power and a monarch's life, with its round of exacting duties for the man who regards the happiness of his people as a sacred trust held by him from Providence. Alexander is very religious. He is too liberal in his views and too democratic for his Russians. He will be the victim of this: that nation needs a strong hand. He would be more suited to the Parisians, he is just the sort of king the French would like. Gallant to women, flattering with men, even with those towards whom he ought to show his displeasure (for he knows better than anyone else how to hide his feelings), his fine bearing and extreme courtesy are very pleasing. Your good Frenchman loves flattery. He does not

¹ An allusion to Alexander's passion for Marie-Antovna Narishkin, *née* Princess Czetwertenski. According to the Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhailowitch (*L'Empereur Alexandre Ier*, 48, 56) the affair lasted from 1804 until 1818.

like my serious mien, and my firmness often proves irksome to him. Our conversations at Tilsit, his relations with you, and what passed at Erfurt have all combined to form the Tsar's opinions. He is clever. Nothing escapes him and his memory serves him perfectly. Since that time his own reflexions and the course of events have furnished him with the experience that he previously lacked. He came to Erfurt quite a different man from what he appeared to be at Tilsit.

"I noticed at Erfurt that he was defiant, and unspeakably obstinate. He wanted to treat with me as between equals. As a matter of fact, circumstances were in his favour and he took advantage of them. He might have obtained much more, but fortunately he only paid attention to the effect that would be produced in Russia by the hope of getting Wallachia and Moldavia; he did not insist upon the evacuation of the forts on the Oder and of part of Prussia. More fortunately still, Austria exhibited some ill-humour and distrust. If the man she sent to Erfurt¹ had been enabled to explain openly the views held by his Court and show some interest in Prussia, it would have made some impression on Alexander. I should have been placed in a very awkward situation: but even Prussia only sent an incapable fellow,² and no one profited by the occasion. Anyhow, I was prepared for whatever might happen. I still had my troops at hand; the sacrifice of Spain was three-quarters made; I should have crushed Austria before anyone could have stopped me. The Russians had not got over their defeat and were in no condition to make war. It might even have done me a service to force me to leave Spain; though it would have been disagreeable, after the reverses we had met with there, and especially to have left the English in the field.

"Threatened by Austria, I should have evacuated a great part of Prussia and retained only a fort on the Oder, as security for the imposts. It is probable that such an arrangement

¹ An allusion to Baron de Vincent's having been sent to Erfurt by the Emperor of Austria. Cf. Alb. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre Ier*, I, 418.

² Count von der Goltz.

would have caused many changes. We should not be here now. Other combinations would have been necessary in order to establish a buffer state. With Prussia liberated, restored and re-established, all political combinations would have been modified. Perhaps things would have been better and more advanced, for I should have been obliged to pay more attention to my war in Spain; I should have induced Russia to maintain the alliance and carry out the Continental System against England. Thus it is that the most insignificant incidents can change the fate of the world, just as the mistakes of our enemies often serve them to better purpose than the talents of their Generals and lead us into even greater errors ourselves. I was wrong in not remaining at Witepsk to organize the country, or in not leaving Moscow eight days after I entered the city. The reverses I have met with are solely due to that. I thought that I should be able to make peace, and that the Russians were anxious for it. I was deceived and I deceived myself. Then, Maret and the Abbé de Pradt have not turned Poland to account. I expected to find it in arms, and it was asleep. Maret beguiled the Poles, the Archbishop discouraged them. I could not have made a worse choice or entrusted my affairs to a less capable man. I have been deceived by his cleverness. He knows how to argue and flatter, but he is incapable of showing action. The most insignificant of my secretaries would have done better. Men of his stamp, belonging to the old regime, are usually worth more than that. They are not liked in the Army or the Court; yet look at Narbonne! Never did leader inspire more zeal in his men; despite his age he undergoes fatigues and privations like a young man. Yet he is upheld solely by a sense of honour. You men of the old army do not like these new adherents;¹ in general, you do not like the *émigrés*. Every time I admit one, whether to the Court or to the Army, I find grumbling and sulking. The bolder spirits take umbrage; it is not so long since they were even ready to rear like a horse annoyed by the bad hands of a poor rider.

¹ Count Louis de Narbonne-Lara, born in 1755, did not return from the emigration until the Consulate.

"If I were a man subject to influence, I should have been almost forbidden to admit any *émigré*, so jealous and uneasy are these men of the Revolution. I have not lacked for advice of the sort, but this clumsy zeal has simply served the purpose of those whom they wished to get dismissed. I thought that with most it was nothing but ambition, the fear of there being fewer posts going, more competition for what there were. Courtiers have been thus from time immemorial; self-interest is everything, the country nothing. I am Emperor of the French, I must protect all alike, show equal benevolence to all. It is my duty to unite all opinions, to merge all interests, to encourage the zeal of all who offer themselves. No one has to render account to me save for the proper discharge of what I have committed to their care. It is not for me to recall antecedents, unless it be to award some recompense. The old nobility still hold great properties, many families are of historic or honourable repute. The son of a Minister, a Chancellor, a Marshal of Louis XV or Louis XVI cannot be merged in the crowd; otherwise there would be an end of civilized society. It is in the interests of France that I rally the old families to the Crown, so that they may feel that it protects them, and shall no longer be its enemies. In general, their children and relatives have served me well."

I maintained that the opposition of which he spoke was well founded so far as some people were concerned, for they but little merited the personal benevolence he showed towards them; though so far as M. de Narbonne was concerned, he was universally liked and appreciated.

"This even applies to you, Caulaincourt," he said. "Although you have risen from the ranks like the rest, though you are a soldier and your success the fruit of your own labours, as is the case with all my Generals—yet your birth and your position as a nobleman arouse jealousy. I have had to uphold you, and on more than one occasion have been obliged to defend you. You are an object of envy; I have often received accusations against you; they tried to discredit you in my opinion after Moreau's trial, because you continued

to see him, even after the days of the Army of the Rhine.¹ It was but a pretext; your real fault, in the eyes of those zealous souls, lies in the fact that you are of noble birth. I was not taken in. These prejudices are shared by many honest men. Having brought about your downfall they would have attacked Duroc and Lauriston. The men who are so proud of bearing a title to-day, not so long ago were bitter against those who had one. Junot alone does not share this weakness. He considers himself more a marquis, more of a great nobleman, than the Beauvais; but Lannes and Bessières and Lefebvre were eaten up with resentment. If I did the slightest thing for a man of noble birth, even if his claim to a title extended to no farther than his father's shaving-brush, they talked to me as though I were acting against my own interests; but I saw through them. Fortunately I have never had a favourite, but if I had singled out any particular person, if I had favoured anyone of noble birth with my confidence, it would have made some men actually ill. By consolidating all interests, by mingling all classes and fortunes, time will exhaust these jealousies."

The Emperor spoke well of various persons, especially of Marshal Bessières, upon whose attachment he relied. He praised his integrity, and his effective administration of the Guard.²

"I was obliged to take it from Lannes,"³ he said. "The itch to amass a fortune, and the advice he took from some knaves who made him their dupe, would have ruined him had I not removed him from that administration. No man,"

¹ As Colonel of the 2nd Carabineers, Caulaincourt made the campaign of 1800 in the Army of the Rhine, under the command of Moreau.

² The Duke of Istria had been appointed Commandant of the Cavalry of the Imperial Guard in May 1812.

³ Lannes had been Commandant and Inspector of the Consular Guard from April 16, 1800, until November 14, 1801, when he was removed and sent to Portugal as French Minister, as a result of his exceeding his credit of 200,000 francs for the clothing of the Guard.

he repeated, "has ever been or still is¹ more attached to me than Lannes is at heart. More than once he has given me proofs of this by exposing himself in perilous circumstances, but he loves me as a man loves his mistress, and wants to manage me, or at least influence me, in order to obtain what he wants. Having been often refused, for his demands are in favour of schemers, he loses his temper; and being passionate by nature, he is then capable of anything. More than once, in such moments, he has done me a wrong which might have proved serious to anyone else, if he had to do with a sovereign of a different nature from mine, or one who held the human race in greater esteem."

After mentioning several acts which had led him to forbid Lannes for a time to appear at the Tuileries, the Emperor went on to say that this Marshal had a strain of opposition and censoriousness in his character which blinded him and outweighed his attachment to his person. He was indiscreet and immoderate. To support this assertion he told me of a certain person to whom the Marshal had boasted of what he had said to the Tsar of Russia, shortly before the last war with Austria. At the time of the Erfurt interview the Emperor had accredited Lannes to meet the Tsar,² and as he travelled in the carriage with that monarch, he told him that the Emperor meant to deceive him, that Napoleon's ambition knew no bounds, that he only breathed war as the means of reaching the end he had in view, and that he, the Tsar, should know better than to trust him. Lannes even boasted of having added various intimate details and cited facts to enlighten the Tsar, as he called it, and prevented his becoming the Emperor's dupe.

. ¹ Lannes had died May 31, 1809. The Emperor's use of the present tense, as recorded by Caulaincourt, must be the result of an error on the part of whoever copied the MS.

² Lannes was sent to meet the Tsar as a compliment. He met him at Friedberg, on this side of the Vistula, and accompanied him in his carriage. Lannes recounted the conversations he had with the Tsar during this journey in a letter published by R. Rittard des Portes, in the *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, for January 1890, p. 143, but naturally he does not appear in the same light to himself as he did to Napoleon.

"I heard this in confidence," said His Majesty, "and it explained Alexander's conduct and his distrust at Erfurt. I did not mention the matter to the Marshal; it would have compromised the man who reported it to me, and I might have had further occasion for his services. Nothing I could have said to the Marshal would have changed him. Had he found himself unmasked he would have become an irreconcilable enemy, whereas he subsequently behaved like an honest fellow. Besides, in other circumstances he had made a rampart of his body in my defence and he died a hero's death, though his conduct had been that of a traitor, for his mission to the Tsar was simply a matter of courtesy and he had not been called upon to express any opinion on me or my affairs. He was not proof against flattering remarks or the confidence that Alexander pretended to place in him; still less was he able to forget an old grudge he had against me—I do not know on what score; for he was as violent in his feelings as he was impetuous on the field of battle. In his latter years he had an admirable coolness and had become as distinguished a General as he was audacious a leader. He was one of my best Generals, perhaps the most efficient on the battle-field. Men are like that, Caulaincourt," said the Emperor. "I am condemned for holding them in slight esteem. Am I wrong? Should I ever show pardon, should I ever forget, if I expected them to be better than they can be or than they really are?"

I returned once more to the inn at Leipzig where, by the time we returned, the stove had become red-hot to warm us. Our dinner or supper, whichever you like to call it, was not yet ready, so the Emperor stretched himself on some chairs which I had placed together near the fire, and I seized the opportunity to continue my notes. At last, supper was served. Extremely impatient to be on the road again, His Majesty cut the meal as short as he could. Just as he was going downstairs a young Frenchman, who said he was an officer on the staff and was staying at the hotel, presented himself to the Emperor for the purpose of giving an account, as he said, of a secret mission on which he had been sent by

the General of the Staff. I was habitually so close to the Emperor at any time he was liable to be accosted, that I found myself between him and this officer, who was so eager that he jostled us. A crowd had collected, attracted by the splendid appearance of the King of Saxony's sledge. The Emperor was hurrying to reach this vehicle and for the moment paid no attention to the man, but, struck by his manner rather than by his insistence, His Majesty paused. Then, guessing that it was a spy posing as an officer, if not some ill-intentioned fellow, he promptly dismissed him. The whole bearing and appearance of this officer appeared to me suspicious. As we left the town I looked behind the carriage, for I had a presentiment that he was following us. There he was, in fact, seated beside our courier, telling him that he had been ordered to accompany us. I ordered him to get down, but it was not easy to make him obey.¹

Beyond Lutzen² there was so little snow in certain parts of the road that the runners of the berline broke. After leaving Auerstädt³ we had to abandon the King's fine sledge and entered Vigenov⁴ at daybreak⁵ in the courier's modest calèche. The postmaster, who knew me, came to chat while the relay was being put to, and I believed he recognized the Emperor, although he gave no sign of having done so. His Majesty partook of coffee without alighting from the carriage.

¹ Bourgoing does not mention this incident, nor does Senator Gross, Municipal Counsellor of Leipzig who, moreover, only knew of the Emperor's visit by hearsay and gives times of arrival and departure that are manifestly wrong. (Gross, *Souvenirs inédites de Napoléon*, published by Captain Velung, pp. 12, 57.) According to Bourgoing, Napoleon left the Hôtel de Prusse at seven o'clock on the evening of December 14th.

² The campaign of 1813 was to immortalize this place, which lies nineteen kilometres south-west of Leipzig, between that city and Naumburg.

³ Between Naumburg and Erfurt.

⁴ This little place is not to be found even on large-scale maps.

⁵ December 15th.

At Erfurt we found Baron de Saint-Aignan¹ at the post-house. The Emperor breakfasted with him, spoke of affairs and issued various orders to him and to the Commandant of the place.² After an hour³ we started again, in a landau that M. de Saint-Aignan had caused to be fitted up so that the Emperor could lie at full length in it. His Majesty was delighted with this, and several times said that a good carriage, at the end of a long journey, gave greater pleasure than a comfortable bed after three months under canvas. He made me get rid of the Saxon gendarme who had been on the seat behind us since we had left Dresden,⁴ and we took a French one in his place.

When we reached Eisenach⁵ the horses were not ready, although it was more than two hours since they had been ordered. Tired of waiting in the carriage, after half an hour the Emperor alighted and entered the posting-house to warm himself and chat with the postmistress, a very pretty young

¹ Saint-Aignan reported to Maret in the following terms (*Archives des affaires étrangères, Correspondance politique Saxe, Maisons ducales*, II, 136, Weimar, December 15, 1812): "The Emperor passed through Weimar this morning at nine o'clock. He was perfectly well and suffered not either from fatigue of the journey nor from the cold of 15° to 20°, which has been felt in this country for some days past. His Majesty had left Dresden on the 14th, at nine o'clock in the morning, in one of the King of Saxony's carriages mounted on a sledge. At ten leagues from here the sledge broke down. His Majesty continued his journey in a post-chaise as far as Erfurt, where I had scarcely time to reach, according to his orders, in order to get a carriage ready for him to continue his journey. No one at Weimar was aware of His Majesty passing through the town, but at Erfurt he was recognized and the news of his arrival instantly spread throughout the place."

² After the battle of Jena, Erfurt had been given a French administration.

³ Still December 15th.

⁴ Put at the Emperor's disposal by the King of Saxony.

⁵ Beyond Gotha, on the road from Erfurt to Frankfort. Bourgoing, who narrates part of this scene, on the authority of Wonsowicz, places it a little farther on, at Vach, a small town in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 89.)

woman.¹ Her husband made us the deepest of bows, but without putting himself to the trouble of setting us on our way. Seeing that the horses he said he had requisitioned from the inhabitants did not appear and that my repeated demands evoked nothing but "Gleich" (immediately), it was clear that nightfall would find us in the difficult defiles of the mountain and forest, so I left the Emperor and went out to make inquiries. All I could learn was that the horses ought to appear. My mind was filled with the idea that perhaps it was known that the traveller was none other than the Emperor, that they were deliberately delaying us until nightfall with the intention of setting an ambush. I was surprised, moreover, that a post-house which I knew to be so well supplied with relays should have to requisition horses, when they had been warned in advance of our coming, especially as we had met no travellers on the road who might have taken horses before we arrived; so I was anxious to speak to someone and assure myself that there really were no post-horses. I went into the courtyard to find out why the horses requisitioned in the town had not come, and talked to a postilion as my eyes wandered round looking for the stables. I inquired whether the postmaster had no horses. He stealthily pointed with his finger to the stables, which were closed. I tapped on the door softly, saying in German "Mach auf" (open!). Taking me, from the voice, to be somebody of the house, a postilion opened the door immediately. I found ten excellent horses, which were being reserved, no doubt, for some better occasion. As soon as they saw me in the stable all the postilions ran up. I ordered them to harness the horses and put them to the carriage. At this they tried to make off, but I stopped them and called to the gendarme, whom I saw beneath the

¹ "The Emperor and his suite had stopped for luncheon at this little town (Vach, according to Bourgoing). Going into the postmaster's room they found a young woman of remarkable beauty who, seated at a harpsichord, was playing an old sonata with extraordinary brilliance. . . . As the pretty postmistress spoke no French, while her august admirer did not know a word of German, the conversation could not progress far. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 89.)

archway, to hold the others. Warned by one of the postilions, the postmaster hastened up and forbade his horses to be used. Upon this a great turmoil ensued. The best reasons in the world failed to move him, and as the postilions dared not disobey him I grabbed him by the collar and forced him into a corner of the stable, ordering him to have the horses put to instantly. As he persisted and I perceived that the noise occasioned by our struggle had already attracted a small crowd, also that the gendarme was finding some difficulty in detaining the postilions, who were trying to make their escape, I drew my sword and presented the point to the postmaster, telling him if anyone came in from outside or made a movement, or if the horses were not harnessed in five minutes' time, I would run him through the body. This argument, thanks to the sword-point which made him understand that I was a man of my word, proved as irresistible to him as to his postilions. The horses were put to in the twinkling of an eye. One of the postmaster's friends, who called himself a counsellor of the Duke,¹ appeared on the scene and at the beginning of the discussion was inclined to take his part, but I bade him mind his own business and give his friend the best advice he could, so curtly that he went off without another word. At sight of their horses being led out, the postmaster's wife appeared and, learning what had happened, ran in tears to the Emperor, stammering in broken French that her husband was being ill-treated.² The Emperor came up just as the last horses were being led across the courtyard. I followed them with the postmaster, to whom the Emperor handed over his loving wife, telling them that they had done wrong to treat travellers in such a manner.³

¹ The Duke of Saxe-Weimar, in whose State are the towns of Eisenach and Vach.

² "The postmistress, hearing her husband's shouts of anger and alarm, besought the Emperor, of whose identity she was not in the least aware, to stop the tumult. He then had the idea to offer her his arm and take her with him to the infuriated crowd." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 91.)

³ Following the story of Wonsowicz, Bourgoing says: "It was simply a question of a refusal to supply tired horses, or some

We hastened to get away, and were never so well served. The postilion, whom I questioned on the road, confessed that the postmaster nearly always made use of requisitioned horses when the roads were bad; and said that, so far as that went, no traveller had been through for thirty-six hours. I could not find out from him whether the requisitioned horses had really been sent for; all I knew was that the orderly had been two hours ahead of us, and that we had been obliged to wait even longer. The Emperor did not know what to make of the postmaster's behaviour. The delay had startled him, and we remained on the alert all night.¹ Never, I think, was I so glad to see day break, for never had the Emperor been in any situation that worried me more. It was bitterly cold. We travelled rapidly, despite the badness of the Westphalian roads. A clumsy postilion managed to snap the carriage-pole, but a couple of straps sufficed to mend it and we lost no more than half an hour. The Emperor stopped at Hanau² and sent for M. d'Albini, Minister of the Prince-Bishop,³ to whom he talked while at his breakfast.⁴ This gentleman was not a little surprised to see His Majesty, especially with such a modest suite.

I was never quick enough for the Emperor in opening the despatch-boxes brought by the couriers whom we met one after the other. The Empress's letters were always the first he

similar cause of quarrel with the postilions." According to the same author, the scene was terminated by the appearance of armed force: "This armed force was nothing more than a detachment of *gendarmérie*, for at that time there was a patrol of French gendarmes at all the towns along the road by which our troops were in the habit of passing." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 92.)

* ¹ Night of December 15th-16th.

² Hanau, near the Main, was part of the Grand Duchy of Frankfort which Napoleon had created in 1806 for M. de Dalberg, Prince-Bishop of the Rhine Confederation.

³ François Joseph Martin, Chevalier d'Albini, Count of the Empire in 1810, born at Saint-Goar on the Rhine, May 14, 1748, died at Diesberg, January 8, 1816, Minister-Secretary of State of the Grand Duchy of Frankfort.

⁴ December 16th.

demanded. He never named her without speaking in her praise, without exhibiting emotion when mentioning her and his son. After the Empress's letter he invariably asked for Madame de Montesquiou's, then the despatches from the Minister of Police, the Arch-Chancellor, the post packet, the Minister of War's despatch, and then those from the other Ministers. He went over the letters and ministerial despatches in the same order and made me read them. He seemed content with the state of public opinion, but awaited with impatience the despatches with news of the effect produced by the direful bulletin. The hope of reaching Mayence in a few hours cheered him above all else; so we urged the postilion on more than ever.

A league before reaching the Rhine we met M. Anatole de Montesquiou,¹ whom I had sent forward from Molodetchna. He was on his way back from Paris, where he had stayed but a few hours. The news he had carried thither would have prepared the public for the bulletin. He brought news of the Empress, and was, I think, very agreeably surprised to meet the Emperor and thus have his own journeyings brought to so speedy a conclusion. His Majesty asked him about the Empress and his son, and then started him off at once for Paris with news of us. But we met him again on the banks of the Rhine which, by reason of the floating ice, had to be crossed by boat.² Thereafter he followed us.

When we had reached the farther side the Emperor went on foot to the post-house while his carriage was being ferried

¹ See above, p. 125: "M. de Montesquiou, who had been sent off from Molodetchna to Paris, arrived there on the 15th, and after receiving his orders from the Empress, started back in a few hours' time. To his great astonishment he met the Emperor a league beyond Mayence." (Norvins, *Portefeuille de 1813*, I, 26.)

² "The Master of the Horse had sent in advance a groom from the Emperor's household to procure a boat for crossing the Rhine, for at that season of the year the bridge of boats had been removed. The groom did not give his orders in the Emperor's name, but in that of the Duke of Vicenza. On the river-bank at Cassel, a little town facing Mayence, this groom met a young orderly officer, Count Anatole de Montesquiou, who would not give up

over and disembarked. I never remember seeing the Emperor so light-hearted. Setting foot once more on French soil¹ made him forget all his weariness and, for a moment, maybe, his misfortunes. When he reached the posting-house the post-master recognized him. The Duke of Valmy, for whom he sent and to whom he talked while the horses were being harnessed up, could not believe his own eyes.² We were on the road again before seven o'clock. Fagalde, who had been sent by way of Gumbinnen and had rejoined us at Glogau, had acted as courier³ together with Amodru after we left Dresden, and they continued their duties now that we were in France.

Fresh despatches from Paris led the conversation to the Malet affair and elicited from the Emperor several observations that, at the risk of repetition, seemed to me worth recording.

"Observe," said the Emperor, "how the revolutionary government has destroyed all ideas of order and stability.

the boat he had already reserved. At this moment the Emperor himself appeared, though unobserved, for it was pitch dark, and taking Montesquiou affectionately by the hand, he said, 'Come, come, don't get cross; we can go over together.'" (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 93.) Bourgoing was wrong in thinking that Napoleon caught up Montesquiou going from Molodetchna to Paris.

¹ Having crossed the Rhine the Emperor was in Mayence, at that time the capital of the Department of Mont-Tonnerre. Bourgoing says he put up at the Hôtel de la Poste, where he arrived on December 16th, at ten o'clock in the evening. The *Journal des Débats* of December 22, 1812, says that he passed through Mayence between three and four in the afternoon, which is more in agreement with Caulaincourt's account, as the latter fixes their departure from the town at before seven o'clock.

² Kellermann, who was then seventy-five years of age, had been in command of the 25th and 26th Military Divisions since April 17, 1812, with his headquarters at Mayence. That evening the Duke of Valmy was giving a grand ball. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 95.)

³ The original meaning of the word "Courier" is apt to be forgotten. In the days of the diligences it was applied to the man who went ahead to prepare the changes of horses and see to the travellers' accommodation.

There is still much for me to do towards re-establishing social order."

"Peace is the only means of attaining this," I said; "it is the first condition for stability, for war is a lottery that engenders a state of uncertainty of the future that is injurious to everything."

"You are right," he replied, "but peace cannot be made just when we want it. With England refusing to come to any terms we have been obliged to take steps to force her."

Reverting to the Malet affair, he continued:

"When my death was announced, not one of those soldiers or officials gave a single thought to my son. The idea of the King of Rome did not even occur to Frochot. It seemed to him simpler to have a fresh revolution than to maintain the established order of things. But when I get to Paris everyone will boast of their devotion to me, and Frochot with the rest of them if I admit him to my presence. An example must be made, for fidelity is a more sacred duty perhaps in a magistrate than in a soldier, who has only to obey the orders he receives without questioning them. Errors committed by magistrates are serious matters, for they are expected to set an example. How blind men are, even where their own interests are concerned! Could Rabbe or Frochot or Soulier hope for more from Malet, from any sort of revolution whatsoever, than I have given them, for more than they would have got from the King of Rome if they had remained loyal to him? Habituation to change, and revolutionary ideas, have left very deep traces. A strong hand like mine was needed, and a man who knows the French as I know them, to have done as much as has already been accomplished. France needs me for another ten years. If I were to die, there would be general chaos; every throne would collapse if my son's collapsed, for I perceive that what I have hitherto done is as yet but insecurely established."

"Our institutions and organisations are not completed," I said. "All the powerful interests of the country must be enlisted for the preservation of the existing——"

The Emperor interrupted me briskly, before I had time to

finish my sentence. "You need a peerage, an aristocracy adapted to the time we live in; but with the fickleness of this nation and the pretensions of the Generals it will be a good ten years before those new institutions will exercise sufficient influence. If there were more talent among the army commanders, they would be like Cæsar's lieutenants and divide the world between themselves: but none has the genius necessary to accomplish a revolution so great as this, though it might save you in the event of my dying. For the rest, the best guarantee against private ambitions lies in the character of the French, in the composition of the army. The day they thought they were only being used to serve one man's private interests these sons of citizens would desert in a body. To-day they all march and remain with the colours because it is to the interest of France to obtain peace even by force of arms. If it was a question of going abroad to fight for some individual cause, not a man would stand by those colours. The danger does not lie there, but in the intrigues carried on in Paris by so many generals. When Soult dreamed of making himself Viceroy or King of Portugal he had everyone against him, for the intrigues of the Generals who wanted to leave the country had aroused the suspicion of the rank and file.¹ They were almost worked up to mutiny,² more, I have always thought, through the intrigues of Loison and several others who were afraid of being captured in Portugal with their booty, than because they believed in Soult's improbable project of wearing a crown. The leaders seized on this pretext to force the Marshal to leave Portugal. Loison yielded the bridge of

¹ Soult was given command of the 2nd Corps of the Army of Spain in June 1808. In February 1809 he invaded Portugal and penetrated as far as Oporto, which he captured on March 29th. In April the idea was conceived in Oporto of making Soult king of Northern Lusitania, but the approach of the British Army under Wellesley caused the retreat of the French, who marched out of Oporto on May 12th and quickly crossed the frontier.

² "The notion of making Marshal Soult king of Portugal soon gained ground in Oporto and the towns of Estremadura and Minho, though it was ridiculed by intelligent people and greeted with insulting jests by the army." (Thiers, XI, 72.)

Amarante.¹ The mass of the men, who believed what it was desired they should believe, would not dream of fighting until they saw that the King was leaving his country. The fact is that if Soult had proclaimed himself king or declared his independence, the army would have abandoned him, and 'King Nicholas'² would have been left with his Portuguese Court.

"If I were to die, the danger would lie in the weakness of the regency and the intrigues of the Generals, who want all the interest, all the places, and especially all the money. You would not pull through, particularly if you failed to take immediate steps to decrease the numbers of the Guard. Observe that I, myself, have not put all arms of that service under the same commander.³ A very firm will is needed to keep the Guard in hand.

"Malet is a lunatic. He must be, if he believed he could overturn a government just by suspending the activities of the police and hoodwinking some senior officers and a prefect for a matter of three hours, when there was an army of two hundred thousand men abroad and he had not one accomplice in high office nor in the provinces. He is a man who wanted to get himself shot by being talked about, but his action has proved conclusively what I partly suspected—that no great faith can be put in mankind. The men of the old regime were unruly and factious. They rose in revolt when they dared, but they would not permit an underling to rebel and they were faithful to their oath. The notions of monarchy and hereditary titles, as well as the desire to preserve the existing order of things, belong to a new language which is to be

¹ This incident occurred on May 12, 1809, the same day that Marshal Soult evacuated Oporto. General Loison, in the presence of superior numbers who threatened his position, did not consider himself strong enough to force the passage of the Tamega. He accordingly evacuated the road to Amarante and freed the road to Braganza for the English.

² This was the name Soult intended to take had he ascended the throne. His baptismal names were Nicolas Jean-de-Dieu.

³ There were four Generals in command of the various arms of the Guard.

learned by the rising generation, but they will never be in the dictionary of the men of to-day. They have already forgotten the misfortunes of the Revolution.

"Clarke boasts of his devotion, of what he did, and the orders he gave, possibly after the event; but he did not even put on his boots to go to the nearest barracks and assure himself of the troops. Only Hulin showed any courage, only Laborde any presence of mind. Savary fell into the trap. He maintained that it was no conspiracy, that Malet was solely responsible for the conception and execution of the whole scheme, that Lahorie and even Guidal knew of Malet's plans only when he took them out of prison. Clarke, on the contrary, thought the plot had ramifications in the Senate and compromised some prominent people. He saw Jacobins everywhere. We will see who is right. To ensure that the thing shall be unravelled I have not even changed the Minister of Police; for he is more concerned than anyone else in repairing the harm brought about by his lack of foresight. Savary clings to his ministry and the salary. He is afraid of losing his post, although, so far as that goes, he no longer needs it, as I have given him plenty of money. He has at least five or six millions. Whether as aide-de-camp or as cabinet minister, he was always asking me for money, and this displeased me. Not that he was alone in this, for never did Ney or Oudinot or many others open or finish a campaign without coming to me for cash. Savary had no fortune; he has children and an extravagant wife. I must, however, do him the justice to say that he serves me with zeal. He has a fine appearance, and this is essential in Paris. His squabbles with Maret weary me. They are always at war with one another. I do not like this bickering; they are jealous of each other. Savary thinks that I prefer Maret to himself. Do you know who set them against one another?"

"I do not know at all."

"Probably women; they would embroil empires. My other Ministers never bother me on that score. They understand one another and do not weary me with their petty jealousies or dislikes. Sometimes I have wanted to get

Cambacérès married, but, when all is said and done, it would have been a nuisance.¹ Women have pretensions, and the wives of functionaries have always been a nuisance at Court. One does not know where to rank them, nor what precedence to give them when there are foreign ladies present.

"Poor Savary is not treated well by the Paris correspondents. Everyone ridicules him. It is always a stroke of luck for conspirators when a Minister of Police gets the worst of it, though another comes to take his place. Savary's fall appears certain, and it seems as if everyone wants the honour of dealing him the first blow."

"That is one reason, Sir, why you should stand up for him and keep him; for, as you say, he will now do better than another. If there has been no conspiracy, if Malet is the sole author of this folly, Savary is justified."

"You are right, but I can scarcely believe it is so. Savary is the dupe of some conspirators who have blinded his eyes, or this would have slipped out to Pasquier, who is a good observer. We shall know all about it—tell me, in how many hours?"

"In forty-four hours, Sir."

"I say in thirty-six."

Upon this the Emperor made me relight the candle, and set to work reckoning alternately by the map and the road-book how many hours it would take us. After disputing about minutes, as if it lay with me to prolong our journey, he then spoke of his anticipated joy at seeing the Empress and his son, and then begin to tease me about the eight hours that he was obliged to add to his calculations, which he spent a couple of hours in going over again. Each stage, each quarter of a stage, each quarter of an hour, each minute was reckoned up. Our inevitable halts, our moments of rest, all were curtailed; the difficulties and delays of the road were whittled down to a minimum. The Emperor forgot Malet, the police, all his troubles. By daylight, his expression showed me that he was already dreaming of the Tuileries, where I was as anxious to see him safely installed as he was to

¹ The Arch-Chancellor, Duke of Parma, died unmarried.

be there. He seemed so confident and happy that for me, also, this was one of the pleasantest moments of our journey.

The following day the Emperor supped at Verdun.¹ Having resumed a wheeled carriage at Erfurt, we had to stop twice a day to grease the axles, and we took advantage of this forced delay to partake of some food. After leaving Dresden the Emperor spoke of nothing but Paris, of the Empress's surprise at seeing him, of how everyone would be astonished. From Frankfort² onwards he calculated the hour of his arrival in Paris, and at each stage confirmed his certainty of reaching there before midnight, if nothing delayed us. The more frequently he met the couriers, the more avid he was for details. He was more satisfied than he had expected to be with the attitude of public opinion, and with its reception of the news of our retreat from Moscow, coupled with the interruption of all communications, but he was much concerned with the effect the bulletin would have caused, and was surprised at getting no news of it, especially as M. de Montesquiou, who preceded his messenger, had rejoined us. Judging by private correspondence, every family was too occupied with its individual relatives in Russia to pay great attention to public affairs. It was not thought that there could have been a battle; the Russians were supposed to be in no condition to fight. This opinion made any disquietude less likely. Our disasters were entirely ignored. As we subsequently learned, it had not been possible to publish the famous bulletin which depicted them so tragically until the 16th, two days later than the Emperor thought.

This delay annoyed the Emperor, who would have liked the publication to have preceded his arrival by some days. He had travelled more rapidly than he thought. Habitually so calm

¹ December 17th. Passing Verdun, December 30, 1812, Castellane writes in his *Journal* (I, 218): "We took our midday meal at Verdun in the same inn where His Majesty had stopped. The maid told us that she had talked to the Emperor without knowing who he was." Napoleon had breakfasted at Saint-Avold. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 98.)

² Napoleon passed Frankfort-on-Main on his way from Hanau to Mayence.

and impassive, His Majesty was now agitated by so many diverse emotions, regrets and hopes; he had such happiness before him and had left such misery behind that he could not hide his feelings. After talking for some considerable time about the various things that filled his mind, he returned for the third time to our adventure at Eisenach. He could not understand the behaviour of the postmaster, who had been warned a long time in advance, and knew that the horses were for a distinguished traveller. The place, the hour, everything rendered his conduct suspicious. The Emperor ordered me to write to M. de Saint-Aignan, instructing him to obtain precise information regarding the motives for the man's behaviour, and to complain to the government if necessary. M. de Saint-Aignan was to make his report at once.¹

"As it is a personal matter," added the Emperor, "I do not wish the postmaster to be arrested now, nor to be dismissed. But it would be satisfactory to know there was no intrigue at the back of it."

The army and Poland furnished inexhaustible topics of conversation. Two army couriers, with news of the happenings during the sixty hours that succeeded our departure, reached us one after the other. The King of Naples and Berthier reported that the rout continued; the intensity of the cold had caused many to desert the colours, even many of the Guard, but there was nothing to prepare us, nothing even that ought to have made us foresee the events that were to follow. The Emperor was well aware that his departure would have increased the disorder to some extent, and that it would affect the Guard more than other corps, but as Wilna was the goal that everyone was striving for, it mattered little to him whether the men reached there singly or with their units. As the issue of rations and clothing were only to be made to men with the colours, he appeared certain of being able to rally the army. His despatches confirmed him more than ever in the opinion that the army would hold Wilna. It was in vain that

¹ Saint-Aignan's report on this matter is not to be found in the *Archives des Affaires étrangères, correspondance politique, Saxe, maisons ducales*.

I combated this view. He jested and laughed at my arguments, which he called misgivings.

"You see everything in black colours," he said.

Nothing but the actual outcome of events was able to undeceive him. At that moment he was more than ever filled with hopes. To find himself back in France seemed to signalize the return of his good fortune. He had a presentiment that his Star was again in the ascendant, and, certain of being able to control events, he could think no more about the disasters which, forty hours previously, he had been able to foresee as clearly as I did.

At Harville¹ we overtook Fagalde, one of the grooms, who had not been able to get beyond Mars-le-Tour. At Saint-Jean² the front axle-tree of our carriage broke, some five hundred paces from the post-house. The Emperor took his place beside me in a little open cabriolet which had served for the courier who had followed us. We had to give up our heavy cloaks, as there was no room for them. Since leaving Fulda we had noticed a great difference in the temperature. It was in this vehicle, that we drove into Meaux. Only Amodru had remained with us and he still had the energy to ride ahead of us and order horses, though we were speeding on like travellers of the infernal regions. The Emperor had been recognized at Mayence; the postilions told everyone who he was; but the postmasters would only believe it when they saw him for themselves. As for the postilions, they whirled us onward like men certain in advance of the napoleon that I was to give to each. It is impossible to give any idea of the eagerness exhibited by the stable-hands and postmaster immediately on our arrival at the beginning of a stage when they heard from the men who had brought us that it was the Emperor

¹ This should undoubtedly read "Before reaching Harville," for that place lies between Mars-la-Tour and Verdun.

² At Saint-Jean-les-Deux-Jumeaux, between La Ferté-sous-Jouarre and Meaux (December 18th). That same day the Emperor dined at Château-Thierry, making his toilet and putting on the uniform of the Grenadier Footguards, though he retained his fur cloak and hat. (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 99.)

himself and not merely the Master of the Horse, as our advance courier had announced. From leaving Metz onward we thought we had come into spring, the ice had given place to horrible mud. At Meaux¹ the postmaster gave us his own chaise that closed properly and took us right to the Tuileries. Since leaving Claye poor Amodru, overcome by drowsiness rather than by fatigue, kept on swaying in the saddle, and I had to encourage him every moment. At the sound of my voice he would wake up with renewed energy. At last the moment arrived when he was to ride ahead into the courtyard and hand us out at the door of the Tuileries.

¹ "Yet another accident to the carriage—and in the course of such a rapid journey this was bound to be a frequent happening—forced the Emperor to travel on to Paris in one of those cumbersome vehicles, mounted on two enormous wheels and with shafts of the old pattern, which for the last two hundred years have been known as post-chaises. It was in this hideous carriage that the Emperor was obliged to make his entry into his capital." (Bourgoing, *Itinéraire*, 99.) Cf. also Roustam, *Souvenirs*, *Revue rétrospective*, VIII, 159.)

CHAPTER VI

Arrival in Paris

THE postilion had received no instructions but he bore us through the Arc de Triomphe¹ at full gallop before any of the sentinels had time to stop him.

"That is a good omen," said the Emperor.

He alighted safe and sound at the central entrance of the Tuileries just as the clock was striking the last quarter before midnight.² I had unbuttoned my overcoat in such a manner as to display the facings of my uniform. Taking us for officers bearing despatches the sentries let us pass and we made our way to the entrance to the gallery that opens on to the garden.³ The Swiss porter had gone to bed, but lamp in hand and dressed only in his shirt he came to see who was knocking. We cut such odd figures that he summoned his wife. I had to assert my identity several times before either of them could be persuaded to open the door, for it was not

¹ The roadway beneath the Arc de Triomphe was reserved for the Emperor's carriage.

² Bourgoing (*Souvenirs militaires*, 212) says at half-past one in the morning (December 18); but it seems certain that Caulaincourt was right in saying a quarter to twelve.

³ Passing through the great gateway of the Pavillon de l'Horloge, the travellers found themselves in the peristyle of the entrance, beneath the roof of which carriages could not pass at that time. At the lower end of this vestibule, on the left, a door opened into an uncovered passage that led to the garden, formed of the arcade that had been built by Catherine de Medici. (By closing the arches Louis Philippe turned this arcade into a series of rooms.) In 1812 the Empress's apartments were on the ground-floor and opened on to the garden in the portion comprised between the Pavillon de l'Horloge and the Pavillon de Flore. They were reached either by the door called The Apartment Door, in the Pavillon de Flore, or by a door at the end of the open gallery. It was at this last-mentioned door that the Emperor and Caulaincourt knocked. (Cf. G. Lenotre, *Les Tuileries*, 280.)

without considerable difficulty and much rubbing of eyes that he and his wife, who held the lamp beneath my very nose, were eventually able to recognize me. The woman opened the door while he went off to summon one of the footmen on duty. The Empress had only just gone to bed.¹ In pursuance of the plan we had agreed upon, I caused myself to be conducted to the apartments of her ladies-in-waiting, ostensibly with news of the Emperor, who was supposed to be following after me. While these various confabulations were going on, the Swiss and several others who had gathered round were eyeing His Majesty from head to foot. Suddenly one of them cried: "It is the Emperor!"

Their delight was indescribable: they could not contain themselves for joy. The Empress's two waiting-women were coming out of her room at the very moment that I was shown into theirs. My fortnight's growth of beard, my dress and heavy fur-lined boots created no better impression here than they had done on the Swiss, for I had to insist that I was the bearer of good news from the Emperor before I could prevent their running away for safety from the spectre-like creature before them. Mention of the Emperor's name at last served to reassure them and assist their recognition of me. One of them went to announce me to her Majesty.

In the meantime the Emperor, who was barely able to conceal his impatience, brought my embassy to an abrupt end by going in to the Empress without further ado, remarking: "Good night, Caulaincourt. Like me, you are in need of rest."²

¹ The Empress had gone to bed at half-past eleven. Cf. F. Masson, *L'Impératrice Marie-Louise*, 416.

² There are notable discrepancies between this account of Napoleon's arrival in Paris and those that have been published elsewhere. Caulaincourt was the only ocular witness to accompany Napoleon from the Arc de Triomphe as far as the door of the Empress's apartments, and he has the greatest claims to authenticity in his facts. It would seem, therefore, that his account should be taken as correct. Madame Durand's narrative (*Mémoires*, 156), which was referred to by Masson, cannot be placed against Caulaincourt's testimony, for that lady was not on duty that night and took no part in the scenes she describes.

In accordance with the Emperor's orders I went at once to the Arch-Chancellor,¹ who was far from expecting that his nightly despatch would have reached its destination so speedily. Had it not been that I drove up in a post-chaise and was accompanied by a liveried footman from the Palace, and had not the postilion's whip served as my passport, I should have had difficulty in gaining access to the Arch-Chancellor. My face was certainly not my fortune. I had to be vouched for by the Court footman who accompanied me, for the Prince's people really did not know what to make of the strange creature whom no one recognized or wished to announce to the Arch-Chancellor. M. Jaubert, of the Bank of France,² and some other persons who happened to be in the Prince's salon, seemed petrified at the apparition. Everyone stared at me speechlessly. No one knew what to make of my arrival or of my face, which seemed in no way to correspond with the name that had been announced. The momentary impression created by my strange costume and unshaven appearance was instantly accompanied in everyone's mind by the reflection "Where is the Emperor? What is the news? Has there been some disaster?"

These questions were asked by all present, though almost inarticulately. The disastrous Bulletin had already appeared and people had not awakened that morning to pleasant impressions. The atmosphere was depressing. No one knew that the Emperor was in Paris: so why was the Master of the Horse there? Why had he left his Majesty? The late hour, the wan light of a solitary lamp, the prevailing state of uncertainty, the sad details which were already known, and the yet worse news that was momentarily expected, all these elements tended to intensify the general depression and arouse

¹ Cambacérès lived at 56 Rue St. Dominique, now 246 Boulevard Saint Germain (Office of the Ministry of Public Works).

² Count François Jaubert, born at Condon, October 3, 1758, died in Paris, March 17, 1822, at one time President of the Tribunal, was appointed Governor of the Bank of France, August 9, 1807, and occupied that post until the First Restoration. During the Hundred Days he was Director-General of Indirect Taxation.

presentiments of the gloomiest nature. Such was the state of mind of those in the salon while I stood waiting for the return of the valet who had gone in to announce me to the Prince. I cannot describe the scene. Everyone stared at me, unable to utter a word, each expecting to read his fate in my eyes: the general expression was one rather of fear than of hope.

I directed my observations to M. Jaubert who, as soon as he had in some measure recovered from his first astonishment, cried:

"And the Emperor, Monsieur le Duc——?"

He was unable to conclude his sentence. His words were taken up by all present, who repeated in tones of consternation:

"The Emperor? Where is he?"

"In Paris," I replied.

At these words there was a general smile of derision while I entered the Prince's apartment. The first word he uttered was identical to what I had just heard and I did not wait for him to finish the sentence before reassuring him. I transmitted the Emperor's orders and stayed chatting for some moments, instructing him to have the guns at daybreak announce his Majesty's return, and to inform the ministers, as well as the Imperial Court, that a levee would be held at 11 o'clock.

As soon as I got to my own house¹ I gave instructions that a page should be sent to Madame Mère and each of the Princesses at 8 o'clock with news of the Emperor's arrival. I wrote to the Grand Chamberlain² telling him to see to the palace service. Count de Montesquiou came to me at once, as well as the Minister of Police whom I had just

¹ The Master of the Horse had official apartments in the Hotel de Longueville, Rue Saint-Nicaise (on the site now occupied by the statue to Gambetta) in the Place du Carrousel.

² Count Anne Elizabeth Pierre de Montesquiou-Fezensac, born at Paris, September 30, 1764, died at Besse-sur-Braye (Sarthe), August 4, 1834, formerly first equerry to the Count of Provence, had been appointed Grand Chamberlain in 1810, after Talleyrand's disgrace. He was the father of Anatole de Montesquiou and husband of the King of Rome's governess.

sent for. M. Anatole de Montesquiou had not been able to follow us.

The next day the Emperor ordered me to take over the portfolio of Foreign Affairs in the absence of the Duke of Bassano, and to bring him portions of the correspondence with Vienna as well as the last treaties with Austria and Prussia. Exhausted by the fourteen nights that I had just spent on the alert, without so much as closing an eye, in a manner overwhelmed by the feeling of responsibility that a journey, made in such circumstances, had entailed upon me, and still unable to shake off the feeling of apprehension lest something should happen to the Emperor whose safety had been confided to my care and honour, my nerves were in such a state of tension that I was in imperative need of rest. I accordingly besought the Emperor to excuse me from this task and to hand it over to M. de la Besnardière.¹ To this he consented.

I cannot describe the relief I experienced when I had the happiness to hand the Emperor from his post-chaise at the steps of the Tuileries. Never in my life have I felt a sense of satisfaction and content like to that which overcame me at seeing him safe and sound in his own palace.

I returned to the Tuileries for the levee at 11 o'clock [December 19]. The ministers and a great number of Household officials, especially chamberlains, were in attendance. As soon as I appeared they gathered round me and treated me as a favoured person, one who for fourteen days and nights had been *tête-à-tête* with the fountain-head of power.

The fateful Bulletin had appeared in the *Moniteur* of the 16th. We had received news of this by the last courier we had met on our way to Paris. The Bulletin had produced such a vivid impression, even upon the most case-hardened courtiers, that they searched my face eagerly for any news of those in the army who might be dear to them. None dared

¹ Jean Baptiste de Goucy de la Besnardière, born at Périers (Manche) on October 1, 1765, died April 30, 1843, clerk to the Foreign Office in 1786 and since 1807 Chief of the Division of Political Affairs in that Ministry.

ask me a question. Only the Bulletin itself had arrived; no private letter had been delivered. It was my good fortune to be able to ease a good many minds; but, alas, there were many others whom I had to wound, though the disorder and confusion that had prevailed in the whole army since Malo-Jaroslawetz made it impossible for headquarters staff to furnish information about many officers, even senior officers, who, having lost their mounts and being in actual want, were driven to the necessity of seeking subsistence by following the bands of marauders who battened on the flanks of the columns, sometimes in front, sometimes at the rear. Men of the most resolute nature were reduced to this cruel necessity, for even previous to the Beresina, a handful of gold would have been valueless to procure a crust of bread.

For the most part these unfortunate wanderers kept themselves alive on the flesh of horses that had fallen by the wayside. They did not even wait to slaughter these poor beasts before dismembering them! As soon as one stumbled and fell it was fallen upon by famishing men, and sometimes its master was hard put to it to defend it from their attack. The firstcomers slashed at the animal's rump; those who were smart enough ripped open its belly and tore out the liver, as being the tenderest and most edible portion. All this was done without so much as a thought of waiting to slaughter the poor beast, so great was men's haste to be on the road again. The luckiest among these waifs made themselves a sort of porridge, if such a term can be applied to filthy flour, that was often nothing but the bran swept up with the dirt of the granary floor and diluted to a wash with water. Lucky the man who had contrived to keep any sort of cooking vessel! He marched with it in his hand and clung to it more tenaciously than to his money; and as even in the midst of our miseries we had to have our laugh, we used to call the men who marched saucepan in hand "guzzlers," and even those who were trudging on with an empty stomach would amuse themselves at the expense of those who had the foresight to retain these necessary culinary articles. If one of them came up to a fire to cook his *potage*, those who had no cooking

vessel fell into line behind him, to take a turn at the saucepan. Anyone who found a few potatoes was an object of universal envy.

Once Poland could be reached the large estates would be certain to offer copious supplies, but they were far away and a considerable distance apart, and no one wanted to get too far away from the road. Master and servant suffered alike, the colonel as much as his servant.

This overwhelming distress had confused all sense of rank, and need had reduced all men to a common level; indeed, the greatest sufferer was he whose rank forbade his setting an example in pillaging. Yet honour, a thousand times over, to our French soldiers, for their exhibition of our national character of innate generosity! How often did these unfortunate fellows, who have braved death a thousand times to procure even the most miserable means of subsistence and who had no hopes whatever of finding anything to eat on the morrow, even after braving once again the squads of Cossacks and malevolent peasants—how often would they give or share their meagre repast with some poor wretch whom they encountered on the roadside, waiting for death to relieve his hunger or sickness! How often would they stop, at risk of being killed or made prisoner, to succour some straggler and help him on his way! How many officers, who felt a repugnance to leave the columns although their regiments had vanished, chose to die in sight of their colours and on the line of march rather than seek their nourishment in the ranks of the stragglers and pillagers! How many officers, let me add, were aided and fed by those same pillagers! It was rarely that a soldier who had procured some means of subsistence passed an officer who appeared to be in need without offering him some food, although he neither knew him nor belonged to his corps. Innumerable times I have myself witnessed kindnesses such as these.

March as I did on foot, in the centre of the army, wrapped simply in a blue great-coat and wearing a plain-bordered cap, I often used to sit down for a while by the roadside to rest. Well! Never a day passed but what some soldier or other,

marching along with a horse grill, some potatoes tied up in a tattered neckerchief, or some gruel in a saucepan, would offer me a share, seeing me wearied or apparently in need of food to enable me to march. If I could but come across some of those gallant lads once more! Honour a thousand times over to the Frenchmen, of whom the great majority were full of compassion in the midst of their greatest distress. If hunger, the most imperative of all forms of need, and the near proximity of death, sometimes rendered men deaf to the supplications and distress of their equals, on how many occasions did soldiers and servants brave all to go and seek food for their officers or their masters! All honour to the nation that could produce such men and to the army that can boast such soldiers! And shame to the scoundrels and disloyal Frenchmen who in any way tarnished a glory so valiantly acquired, a name more precious than any wreath of laurels, which will be the envy of our descendants as it has long been the envy of a Europe that has never been able to defeat us!

This aspect of the French character, the indifference to want in the midst of the greatest privations, the scorn of death when there was the slightest chance of even a reflection of glory, recalls to my mind the action of a light-infantryman at the camp of Boulogne. As the Emperor was reviewing the regiment this man presented arms and advanced from the ranks, as if he had some request to make.

"What do you want?" asked the Emperor.

"Wait a moment, General," replied the man, as he pulled down his knapsack.

Everyone thought he was looking for some paper, and as he did not seem to be hurrying himself, his officers told him he should have had it ready in his hand. But without getting in the least flustered he replied:

"The General won't mind waiting, for it is something I have been keeping for him a long time."

The Emperor began to laugh and told him to take his time. Officers and men alike broke out into a roar of laughter round the man while he rummaged among his dirty linen

until at last he extracted a little box, black with filth. This he offered to the Emperor, saying:

"Take it, General. I have kept this burnt almond for you ever since we were at Genoa. It is the ration issued out to us one day. We had devilish empty stomachs then. Well, hungry as we were, one day I said to myself, 'You must keep to-day's issue and if ever you have the luck to meet General Bonaparte you shall give it to him.' It was no great risk, for if the Austrians had made me prisoner or killed me, they wouldn't have been able to make much of a meal of it. Now I am glad you have got it."

Officers and non-commissioned officers who had served at Genoa under Marshal Masséna recognized the cocoa bean, the size of a small nut, as the ration issued to the troops at that time. They all bore witness to the good conduct of the light-infantryman, moreover; who, although he had been mentioned in despatches for deeds of bravery, had been ineligible for promotion because he could not read. The Emperor caused him to be given a gratuity.

To hark back to the last day of our journey, when the news we received from the army naturally turned our talk upon the current situation.

After reading the letter from the King of Naples, the Emperor observed, as if he had already had a presentiment of what would take place:

"I am afraid he will not take the necessary steps to reorganize the army. Perhaps I should have done better to bring him to Paris or let him go back to Naples. But he might not have returned to me when the campaign re-opened, and I should have felt the loss of him, with the young untrained cavalry I now have. He is attached to me, but he is ambitious and ridiculously vain. He is under the delusion that he is gifted with political talents to a superior degree, whereas he is, in fact, destitute of any such thing. The Queen has more energy in her little finger than the King has in his whole body. They are jealous of Eugène, for they have cast their eyes on the whole of Italy. The King wants to persuade the Italians that the country can have no existence nor any future except

through the union of Italy under one sceptre. He is secretive towards me, but, as he is not so discreet with everyone, it all comes to my ears. If the King should outlive me he might commit any folly, but I will put things in order beforehand. It does not take long for the Frenchmen whom I have turned into kings to forget that they were born in this same France, and that even now their most honourable title is that of being a French citizen."

In this connection he mentioned his brothers and Bernadotte, giving me many details in support of what he had remarked.

He spoke of the need of revivifying the morale of the army, of reawakening in our infantry, marching as they were in isolated bands, dying of hunger, and marauding in small parties along the roads, some sense of their glory and misfortune, to inspire them with some of their old energy.

"These men," he said, "who have quailed before no danger, must once again be imbued with a sense of what they can still accomplish for their own safety and the honour of their country. Physically they are exhausted, but, although they lag behind and wander about like spectres, their old feelings could be once again aroused if an energetic leader would take them in hand and say: 'Halt, Frenchmen that you are! The Cossacks must come no farther! The time has come to conquer or to die!'"

Talking in this strain led the Emperor to reflect that this moral force and energy that enabled men to stand up to difficulties was not the heritage of everyone.

"No one," he said, "is braver on the battlefield than Murat or Ney, and no one has less power of decision than they when it comes to a question of matters of state. In general," he added, "there are very few real statesmen. I certainly possess the most capable ministers in all Europe, but it would soon be seen how far they fall short of their reputation if I no longer put the wheel in motion."

He paid a great tribute to the capability of Count Daru, and in the matter of finance mentioned Count

Mollien¹ as exhibiting the clearest and most succinct views on this matter.

"Clarke," he observed, "is nothing more than an excellent head assistant; he is a good worker, and honest, but a man of mediocre abilities. He is good for his present post as I have the Ministry of War run by one of my aides-de-camp, or rather because I see to it myself. M. de Cessac,"² he went on, "is a man of integrity and, after Daru, the most suitable person to carry on the Administration of the War Office. Molé³ is a man of character. I shall make use of him; he will take his place as chief of the Bench; if he justifies my confidence in him there I have other plans for his employment. Baron Pasquier is a man of parts; I think he has abilities out of the common and I believe him to be a man of decision. I am trying him at the Prefecture of Police, so that I can push him forward if he fulfils my expectations. But I do not like his relations with the Rémusat,⁴ for they are schemers and money-grubbers and I have been sadly mistaken in them."

¹ Count François Nicholas Mollien (1758-1850) entered the Ministry of Finances in 1778 and rose to be chief clerk. During the Consulate he was Director of the Sinking Fund Office. In 1806 he became Minister of the Treasury and occupied that post until April 3, 1814. He returned to office during the Hundred Days.

² Lacuée, Count de Cessac, was named Minister of the War Administration Office on January 3, 1810; he was replaced by Count Daru on November 20, 1813.

³ Count Mathieu Louis Molé (1781-1855) had been appointed Master of Requests to the Council of State in 1806, Councillor of State and Director-General of Bridges and Highways in 1809. Napoleon named him Minister of Justice, November 20, 1813.

⁴ Augustin Laurent Rémusat, successively Prefect of the Palace, First Chamberlain to the Emperor, Grand Master of the Wardrobe, and Superintendent of the Theatres of Paris, together with his wife, Claire Elizabeth Jeanne Gravier de Vergennes, Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress, had been overwhelmed with honours by the Emperor. How they repaid them can best be gathered by reading the *Mémoires* of Madame de Rémusat. Cf. Prince Napoleon, *Napoléon et ses détracteurs*, 131.

Thus did the Emperor pass in review certain councillors of state and others, though, as it was in a manner but little flattering or agreeable for them, I passed no comment. His Majesty then began to talk about his son. He asked me once more whom he could entrust with his education, adding that France, which was so rich in men of talent, was, nevertheless, poor in men of exceptional qualities when there was a question of making a choice from among them.

"Is it not a fact that you would find it very difficult, Caulaincourt, to name any particular person, even to make a selection from among those whom we have just been discussing?"

In some degree Counts Daru and Molé seemed possessed of the qualities he desired. But he reproached the former with being too free and easy, while the latter was a pedant and apt, he said, to partake too much of the manner of the old-time lawyers.¹ Baron Pasquier was possessed of many most suitable qualities, though it was a pity that he had been obliged to make his entrance into administration by way of the police, good school as it was.

"Fontanès," he said, "is too much a man of letters. His appointment as head of the University was popular, especially as he proved a clever director of public instruction. Exceptional as are his gifts of oratory, he is completely destitute of any large ideas, of that far-seeing and broad-minded political outlook and administrative ability that go to make a statesman. Besides," His Majesty went on, "he has praised me so unstintingly that the public would certainly not fail to say that I had chosen my chief flatterer to be my son's governor."

He then talked about Duke Decrès.²

"A clever and capable man," he said, "possessed, moreover, of determination and force. But his cynicism, his gruff and

¹ Count Molé was the son of Molé de Champlatreux, President of the Parlement of Paris, and of Mademoiselle de Lamoignon, both very old parlement families.

² Rear-Admiral the Duke Decrès became Minister of Marine on October 3, 1801, and remained in that post until 1814, returning to it during the Hundred Days.

disagreeable manners are displeasing. He labours, besides, under the disadvantages of his early education and the crude upbringing of a seaman. He is as stubborn as you, Caulaincourt," added the Emperor. "On one occasion he has good as told me I could take his services or leave them, as I pleased; but he saw that I was the man to take him at his word, and as he greatly values his post, so he became more tractable. He is hated in the Navy, though he has rendered it great services. He has enlightened me on many points on which I held some very mistaken notions. He had an intense dislike of flotillas, and that was the cause of our disagreements. As he only took count of large ships of war I could scarcely make him perceive what I was aiming at. He grudged the money spent on building these flotillas, and he was right. Decrès has always been against my pinnaces."

The conversation then veered again to affairs in general. What the Emperor had said to me concerning the projects of the King of Naples now enabled me to speak of Rome and the Pope. I deplored the captivity of His Holiness which was creating, I said, a bad effect everywhere, although the Christian princes no longer took up arms in defence of the Vatican. He agreed that it was a disagreeable affair.

"By removing the Pope for a while from Rome,"¹ he said, "I thought to remove him from the sphere of evil counsels. Perhaps I should have done better to have left him there, my government in Italy being strong enough even to have kept the priests in order. Yet it was to that *coup d'état* that I owe the tranquillity that country has enjoyed for a year past. The English have never ceased to scatter money there for the purpose of revolts, or at any rate partial risings, and they have failed. If one considers the whole matter without bias, even the most timorous conscience can find in my discussions with the Pope nothing other than a political difference of opinion. As for myself, to whom the Church owes the re-establishment of religion in France—perhaps, even, its very

¹ Pius VII, who had been arrested in Rome, July 6, 1809, had been a prisoner at Savona for three years; he was moved to Fontainebleau in June 1812.

existence in Europe—I am certainly as good a Catholic as Charles V, who also had a Pope taken away forcibly, without being declared a heretic for doing so. If I had followed the counsels of certain very enlightened men, at the juncture when I was re-establishing religion, I should not have placed myself in a position of dependence upon Rome. Various plans were laid before me. I might have done like the Russians and created a sort of patriarchate, declaring myself head of the Church, or at least its protector, as the King of Prussia is of Protestantism. Thereby everybody would have become Protestant, for they would no longer have gone to confession. Another plan would have been to form a permanent council or committee of bishops to administer the spiritualities. This would have been a Gallican Church; it would not have changed in any way the habits of the people and therefore would have offended the scruples of no decent person, for no one would have known the nature of my relations with Rome.

“I could have carried out what was attempted by Louis XIII and Richelieu, and created a patriarchate.¹ This might have been done by Louis XIV.² I was in a better position than he for liberating France from the annoyance of its subjection to Rome. At bottom, what does it matter to Religion whether purely formal decisions come from Avignon or from Rome, so long as its dogmas and ordinances are observed? Whatever I should have done in those circumstances would have appeared to the most devout Catholic as nothing but a benefit. I always thought that the force of circumstances and the march of ideas would compel Rome to make concessions,

¹ In the States General of 1614 the Third Estate took the initiative in an article proclaiming the absolute independence of the Crown; the Clergy set this article aside, and Richelieu adopted the rôle of mediator between the Ultra-montanism of the one and the Gallicanism of the other. “The long pontificate of Urban VIII marked a truce in the relations between the two powers.” Gabriel Hanotaux, *Essai sur les libertés de l'Eglise gallicane*, XCIII.

² This should read “could not be done”; doubtless a copyist's mistake. Regarding the pretensions of Louis XIV to be spiritual director of the souls in his dominions see *Racueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs de France*, XVII (Rome. II, XX).

but, like all celibates, the priests are egoists. The present is all that matters to them, the future is nothing. Their attitude towards France has resembled that of the men of the Revolution towards the colonies: "Let Rome itself perish rather than one principle be abandoned," and they have imperilled everything. Our priests are exclusive, like our religion. They form an ever-active power.

"What I have not been able to get from this Pope, who is a worthy man, a good pastor, a man without passions, I should never be able to obtain from anyone else. He is most moderate in his counsels. His Cardinals are, however, ultramontanes and spoil everything. It is this foreign spirit, however, this personal interest, which brings everything round to the Popes, who are always Italians, and this prevents us from coming to any understanding. Actually the Pope likes me. He knows that I like him and that the changes I desire are all in the future interests of religion, but he is the slave of his conception of duty and he would sooner be martyred than give his consent to an arrangement which would be contrary to the advice of his Apostolic Chamber, which is, for him, as much a matter of obligation as a purely formal affair. The Pope even has a predilection for me, for he knows that it is to me that he owes the re-establishment of religion in France. Like his Cardinals he has been astonished at the depth of piety that has been found among us, surprised, too, at our good ways of life which are so much better than the ways of Italian bigots. I, too, am attached to the Pope, I have always regretted the necessity of going to extremes with him. He occupies my finest palace; he is served by my household; he can do what he likes, and he knows that I have always wished for him to be treated with all the respect that is his due. There has been a fatality with Rome as with Spain. Things have turned out differently to what I wanted."

The Emperor then added that at the time of the first Concordat¹ it had been easy to give a direction to public opinion,

¹ July 15, 1801. The Second Concordat, or the Concordat of Fontainebleau, was signed on January 25, 1813. Pius VII retracted his acceptance on March 24.

which was quite undecided and in no way clear upon these matters; so he had been able to direct it as he wished, for there was only a sparse clergy in France, insignificant and poor, who would have done anything they had been asked so long as they were given the wherewithal to live. The rising generation, who had no memories of the past, would have followed unopposed in whatever direction the government pointed; the old people, having been for a number of years without any public religion, would have rallied without difficulty to any clergy who would have led them well. Not wishing to make any proselytes, leaving everyone complete liberty of belief, and affording equal protection to all cults, no resistance whatever would have been aroused. The populace, perceiving no chance in the administration of the various religious charities, would have dispensed with the utmost ease with papal intervention, and as for the bishops they would have been the less liable to observe certain formal relations with Rome in that it was to their interest to form a Gallican Church. It matters little to the nation whether there be a legate of the Holy See resident at Paris, or a sort of patriarch or primate who would issue free of charge dispensations which would otherwise have to be purchased in Rome. Out of respect for the religion of his forefathers, he added, and for questions of conscience in general, he had rejected this project although it had many advocates, even among some of the dignitaries of the Church. One day he would probably be reproached for not having seized this opportunity of freeing France from all the pretensions put forward by the Holy See.

"The present state of affairs," he said, "is a cause of regret to me. The Pope is really two persons in one man, the temporal head of the Church and the Spiritual. It is possible for me to be at war with one and at peace with the other. It does not matter whether the Pope is at Paris, or Avignon, or Rome; the actual site of his residence is immaterial so far as religion or dogma are concerned. The Sacred College may as well be in France as in Italy, it will be as independent in one country as in the other. So far as that goes, I should not even refuse to let the Pope go to Italy if his health should demand

his residence in that country. What I want is for him to complete what is now incomplete and to arrange matters so definitely that the clergy, who are always ready to encroach, should no longer find any pretext for making difficulties. As a matter of fact I had not anticipated encountering such a protracted resistance. I am pained by it, for I like and venerate the Pope; but the arrangements planned by Francis I¹ after the Battle of Pavia² and subsequently approved by the States of the Realm as well as by the consensus of opinion at the time,³ can no longer serve as a rule nor impose conditions to which the France of to-day must submit. It has grieved me to find myself obliged to go to extremes with the Pope, whose character I esteem, but reasons of state have forced me to it. I cannot give way. However, I shall do what I can to settle this affair amicably when I reach Paris, though there are points upon which I shall never give way.⁴ Every man must be master in his own house. Religion ought to aid the Government, not to go against it, and cause it embarrassment. It ought to preach union, order and submission, not foment disorder and rebellion.

"In any case," he went on, "I have not re-established religion in France, with such difficulty and even danger to myself, just to give the Pope the right to meddle in the temporal affairs of my government. By its very nature the clergy is a body of intruders. It ought not to form a people, a section to itself, in the very heart of the nation, a power and an interest bound up in itself in the heart of the State. On the contrary it ought to aid the action of the Government with the utmost zeal, and occupy itself solely in drawing the greatest possible number of the Faithful to the churches, in making them all participate in the consolations that true

¹ The Concordat of December 19, 1516.

² A mistake. The Battle of Pavia was lost by Francis I on February 24, 1525, nine years after the signing of the Concordat.

³ See Gabriel Hanotaux, *Essai sur les libertés*, LX.

⁴ For the negotiations set on foot by the Emperor on his return, see Count de Mayol de Lupé, *La Captivité de Pie VII*, 643.

Religion can offer. Rome," he went on with some warmth, "must march with the spirit of the age unless she wants the age to march on without her. Everything I demand is perfectly reasonable, as much in the interest of the Church as it is in that of the people, and it is wrong to make a political into a religious question. I am as well acquainted with the rights of the Roman Church and its history as the Councillors of the Pope or His Holiness himself can be."

After reverting to the period when he concluded the Concordat, the Emperor talked to me about the Tribune.¹ He told me that the abuses of the Tribune having demonstrated to him the inconvenient nature of our political organization, he had sought how they could be remedied. He had striven to calm the most turbulent among the orators by making them realize that a Government that sought to establish itself, and had barely established peaceful relations with the rest of Europe needed to be supported and not attacked. The spirit of hostility that was making itself felt against him crippled his actions abroad as much as it pestered him at home. Obligated to create an entirely new system, completely to reorganize internal affairs, to tend to the wounds inflicted by a protracted revolution, and to calm the passions it had inflamed, some years of benevolent tolerance were needed, even of indulgence when some error was made, instead of the bitter censure that was levelled against him. It was impossible to restore the finances without imposing some form of order, without eradicating abuses or dismissing certain persons.

"The orators," he went on, "would listen to nothing. They were more occupied with winning popularity than looking after the true interests of the country, and they were invincible. I was convinced of the necessity of making changes; being presented with the simple alternatives of providing for the interests of France or of furthering the

¹ The Tribune composed of a hundred members had been created by the Constitution of Year VIII. Its function was to consider forthcoming legislation, and the Legislative Body had nothing to do but pass or reject these laws without debating them.

pretentious ambitions of a few orators who were mostly destitute of any feeling of patriotism, my decision was speedily taken. I silenced the tribune,¹ acting on the advice of the most liberal-minded men, who desired a workable form of government and realized that it would need to be strong enough to maintain peace at home and abroad. I obtained this result by changing the organization of the Tribunate, as it was no longer in harmony with our ideas.²

"This period and the time that followed it was the happiest of my life. I had reconciled France with the Holy See and had concluded a Concordat by which our mutual relations were regulated in what seemed to me a suitable manner. This Concordat," the Emperor said, "had met with much opposition among various statesmen. Certain prominent generals showed themselves even more than opposed. One or two conspiracies were the result, and some of my most faithful and devoted generals of Italy and Egypt were mixed up in them."³ Some made it a pretext for showing their discontent at my not having allowed them to exploit the funds of the State by forming a Pretorian Guard, for whose blind devotion I should have to pay by pouring out my gold. Some I removed from their commands, others I dismissed. For some time I even refused to see those implicated, but eventually I pardoned them, just as though they had not abused my confidence and had been guilty of nothing more heinous than misplaced zeal. They thought they had been merely indiscreet: as I am incapable of bearing rancour all was forgotten."

The Emperor reverted to his differences with Rome, and

¹ The admittance of the public to hear debates on legislation was prohibited by a *senatus-consultum* of August 5, 1802.

² The Tribunate was reduced to fifty members and then suppressed by the *senatus-consultum* of August 19, 1807, its members being distributed between the Senate, the Legislative Body and the prefectoral or judiciary administration.

³ Augereau was entrusted by his comrades with the task of expressing to the First Consul their desire not to appear at the ceremony of re-establishing Religion that was to take place at Notre-Dame.

the project many people had entertained at the time of the Concordat for withdrawing France from her spiritual dependence upon the Holy See. The interruption of relations that followed upon the Revolution had established the fact that the Faithful wanted priests to say Mass and administer Extreme Unction. "But it mattered little," said the Emperor, "whether those priests were instituted by the Vatican or by a committee of bishops. All that was needed was to regularize the existing state of things, and satisfy the religious requirements of the community. In such an organization the bishops would have found an independence and a power that would have been entirely to their liking. The hope of attaining to the highest place in this Council or Committee of the Gallican Church would have flattered their ambition and at the same time have furnished the Government with guarantees of Anti-ultramontane principles. I have been carried away by the prejudices of my childhood, or rather, seduced by the hope that the Concordat would achieve the pacification of the West and knit together all men of understanding. I thought that the clergy whom I had re-established at the peril of my life, would be devoted to me: I imagined that the Roman Court, enlightened as to its true interests in the eighteenth century, would second my endeavours. But I have been mistaken. The clearly-recognized interests, the ideas and the habits of the times, all ought to have guaranteed for me the agreement and backing of the Church. I discussed the matter with Rome, with priests as with other men. I thought that their interests would outweigh their prejudices, and my mistake has cost me dear. Time and reflexion triumph over much opposition, they bring back the most recalcitrant of men: but nothing has an effect on a clergy who are foreign to the country. At Rome little attention is paid to the interests of France. The clergy is Roman, for its head resides in Rome; it is a nation to itself in the midst of other nations. So far as priests are concerned, their fatherland is Rome, thus it is that we can never be in agreement. Common sense means nothing to the clergy; they seek their own interests before all else. Opposition becomes a dogma; resistance to authority

carries with it the palm of immortality, and all the more so when it demands a courage that entails no danger. These good gentlemen have a relish for this new and comfortable form of martyrdom which would bring more honour to them were I stupid enough to torment them. But I leave them to their zeal. I have been mistaken. Excellent priests told me so at the time; the establishment of a Gallican Church would have been far preferable. I should have attained the same end. Everyone would have been at peace, even contented, with the exception of those devout souls whose resistance I have never overcome. I have created this embarrassing situation for myself by paying attention to people whom I have brought back just to annoy me. These Romans must not meddle with our affairs; foreigners have no place in them. A man's house is his castle. One of these days I shall finish off the whole matter by talking privately to the Pope; he is a good priest and a venerable Christian who desires nothing but what is good."

I represented to the Emperor that to me it seemed difficult to settle all these differences amicably, seeing what discrepancies there were between our actual demands and the previous arrangements, not to mention the loss, so far as the Pope himself was concerned, of his Estates.¹ This loss put a different aspect on his relations with the whole of Christendom and deprived him of the independence required by his pontificate in matters temporal as well as spiritual. I advanced the matter of his health, the differences of climate, and finally the question of that self-respect which animates all men, more especially those of sovereign estate, and pre-eminently one the nature of whose sovereignty bears a sacred character in the eyes of Christendom.

The Emperor listened to what I said with the utmost benevolence, convinced as he was, in some respects, with the justness of my remarks.

"It was the constant Italian intrigues," he said, "that forced me to take the Pope away from Rome."

¹ The States of the Church had been invaded in April 1808 and their annexation to France was decreed on May 17, 1809.

Even since his removal it had been impossible to bring the Italian Cardinals to reason. If the Pope were to go back everything would be overturned and an intolerable state of affairs would ensue. Never had Italy been so tranquil as since the Pope's departure. Every intrigue, English and otherwise, had miscarried, and this happy result was due, in spite of the absence of any military forces, to the decision that he, the Emperor, had made. As Bishop of Paris, the Pope would not be unhappy as he had been when Bishop of Rome. He would be very comfortably established in the archbishop's palace which had already been refitted and could be made into a splendid residence.¹ If the climate did not agree with him perhaps Avignon would suit him better. Having made the mistake of allowing the Roman Court to meddle in imperial affairs, and that Court having made the mistake of refusing his reasonable demands and taken unbrage at them, things being what they were the Emperor could not, he said, give way.

"Now," His Majesty went on, "it is indispensable to keep the Pope in France and to bring the Cardinals to him, so that he shall have the Sacred College under his influence. The decision as to this rests with France, since her Catholic population represents the majority of the Pope's adherents. This being the case he would find himself in the very midst of his flock. Where should I be if the Pope were to die, and this wise man who among all the successors of the Prince of the Apostles has shown himself so moderate, were to be replaced by an Austrian or an Italian, fiercely antagonistic—ultramontane as would certainly be the case? The role of prisoner and petty martyr that the Pope now plays, or is made to play by his counsellors, is already the cause of enough embarrassment, I have no desire to add to it. The interest that naturally attaches to everyone who is deemed to be persecuted is in this case augmented by the veneration in which the Pope's character is justly held—a veneration that is strengthened by the idea of his spiritual and temporal sovereignty. No one

¹ This refers to the old archbishop's palace adjacent to Notre-Dame.

thought about the Pope when he was in Rome. No one cared about him or what he did. My coronation and his appearance in Paris gave him an importance that his subsequent misfortunes have only served to increase. At Fontainebleau he is a free man: but he is called a prisoner. He has a fine residence; they say he lacks for everything. He can go where he likes, except to Italy; he is said to be in fetters. He has my carriages, my stables are at his disposal; but just because he has not chosen to leave his room he is said to be in the clutches of a gaoler. A few devotees and intriguing priests proclaim him a martyr, to excite sympathy and inaugurate a Little Church.¹ They thought to make me tremble with an excommunication. Charles V laughed at such a thing and I shall pay no more attention to it than he did. These Roman thunderbolts are nothing. This excommunication has damaged the Pope rather than me in public opinion.² The sympathy that is aroused by one who is in no position to defend himself is what touches and moves the heart of Frenchmen.

"We shall get to the truth in the end; eventually it will be generally known that it is the Pope's counsellors who force him into difficult situations. When that is realized he will be the object of no more sympathy. In short, this business of the Pope is embarrassing in the present state of affairs and it is an embarrassment that I mean to put an end to. I could settle more by talking to the Pope for just one hour than could be arranged in a whole year of diplomatic conversations through any bishops I might send him. He knows that I revere him and that I have done more than anyone else for religion, and

¹ The name Little Church was applied to that group of ecclesiastics and laity who refused to recognize the Concordat of 1801. The majority of its adherents were to be found in Touraine and the west of France, where the clergy, for the greater part old *émigrés*, raised altar against altar. At its head were the archbishops and bishops of the old regime who had not wished to resign their offices into the hands of the Pope.

² Although not specified by name, and therefore excluded from the effects of the excommunication, it was really against Napoleon that the bull *Quam memoranda* was launched, June 10, 1809.

this gives me an immense advantage in his eyes. He realizes that in my position I cannot yield upon certain points that inevitably concern the peace and well-being of the State. I shall endeavour to finish things off. However, I cannot let slip this opportunity of delimiting once and for all the rights of the Gallican Church and its spiritual sovereign—for I know of only one temporal sovereign in France; myself. Religion will lose nothing by what I propose, nor will the Pope, for I will make him richer than he has ever been. His influence will be augmented by all the influence that is mine. By living in Paris, which is more suitable than Rome, he will not be any the less head of the Catholic Church. Everyone will gain by it. The Church will have nothing to do but minister to the Faithful. The arms of Heaven will no longer be invoked to cause trouble on Earth. Religion will come to the aid of government instead of being opposed to it; it will defend thrones rather than attack them. What does it matter to the cause of Religion whether the successor of St. Peter be Bishop of Paris or Bishop of Rome?"

The Emperor went on to reflect that it was impossible to gain any idea of the influence the clergy were constantly trying to exercise, that the hand of the Jesuits was to be found everywhere, that the desire of making conversions was as powerful as it had been thirty years ago.

"The clergy," he said, "constitute a power that is never quiescent. Enemies if they are not friends, their services are never to be had for nothing. Unless one is to be under an obligation to them it is imperative to be their master. In self-defence they must be curbed, otherwise a troublesome state of hostility will be engendered which would be inconvenient in that it would necessitate punishment. For the clergy to be kept as an aid to government they must remain on a friendly footing; and for that it is essential that their rights should be clearly defined. In my time their pretensions would never amount to anything of consequence, but when I am gone they would increase. God has given me the strength and the zest to undertake great things. I must not leave them imperfectly accomplished. The clergy must occupy themselves

with reconciling us to Heaven, giving our womenfolk religious consolation, and extending the same to us when we get old; and they must abandon the power of this world. King in his own temple, the priest must become a subject when he crosses the threshold."

The Emperor returned to the question of conversion and proselytizing, recounting to me what he had discovered a few years before.

"The Jesuits," he said, "were recruited from the lycées and even from the École Polytechnique, in the heart of the eager and enthusiastic youth which still passed as Republican beneath the very shadow of the Imperial Eagles. When I was first informed of their successful propaganda in the lycées, far from opposing it I was well satisfied that young men should be recruited for the seminaries. But when I observed how things were tending, becoming anxious that the best endeavours should not go astray, I caused an exact account to be rendered to me of what numbers the schools were supplying to the clergy. Surprised to find that the Jesuits had taken pupils from the École Polytechnique, and annoyed that they should have had this success at the cost of the secular clergy, I sent for Monge, founder of the École Polytechnique and still the father and the counsellor of all its ardent youths.¹ 'These are fine things I hear about your school,' I said. 'Are your young people getting their heads turned?' Without listening to what I was going to say, Monge imagined that his young men, full of ideas and memories of Rome and Greece, had displeased me by some discussion or proposition, and he immediately began to assure me that it required a little time to make young heads submit to other influence, or to change youthful opinions. 'The Empire,' he told me, 'was some-

¹ After leaving the Ministry of Marine, April 15, 1793, Gaspard Monge rented a house in which he established a school for young men destined for the army or the navy. This was the origin of the Central School of Public Works, which later became the École Polytechnique. On his return from Egypt (October 9, 1799), Monge was nominated Senator (3 Nivose, Year VIII), and Director of the École Polytechnique in 1802, which position he retained until the Second Restoration.

thing quite unexpected until a few years ago. These young men will become monarchic with time, and after their first campaign.' 'Monarchic, indeed——' I began, but without letting me finish my sentence Monge interrupted in his wheedling voice (and the Emperor laughed heartily as he said this), 'Your Majesty has turned so sharply that many people have been unable to keep pace with you!'"

The Emperor told me that he had not been able to help laughing even more heartily at this naive reply. By this time, amazed at his own audacity, Monge was yet more astounded at the Emperor's reply, when he cried, "Your young men have turned even more sharply than I have, for they are becoming Jesuits." Monge was stupefied. "Jesuits?" he exclaimed, like a man who could not believe his ears. The Emperor gave him the names of the neophytes and told him to make inquiries as to the tendency of this religious fervour and if any other pupils had been won over. He was assured that the movement was confined to two elect souls; one of them a distinguished young man whose imagination was so vivid that he should have been under observation to see that it led him in a right direction.¹

¹ This is how François Arago, in his *Histoire de ma jeunesse*, I, 96, records these facts: "There was at that time in the Bois de Boulogne a dwelling called The Grey House where M. Coessin, high priest of a new religion, gathered round him a certain number of adepts, such as Lesueur, the musician; Collin, tutor of chemistry at the École, Binet, etc. A police report had been handed to the Emperor, to the effect that the frequenters of The Grey House were affiliated to the Society of Jesus. The Emperor was disturbed and irritated at the news. 'Well,' said he to M. Monge, 'so your beloved pupils are turning into followers of Loyola, eh?' Monge began to deny it. 'You deny it, do you?' retorted the Emperor; 'well, it may interest you to know that one of your tutors is in this clique.' Everyone will understand that after such an observation it was impossible for M. Monge to suggest M. Binet as his successor." It was for this reason that in 1809 Arago was chosen by Monge to succeed him.

Jacques Philippe Marie Binet, born at Rennes, February 2, 1786, died at Paris, May 12, 1856, was an old pupil of the Polytechnique, where he graduated in 1804. Shortly after leaving the school he became tutor in geometry under the professorship of

Continued overleaf

"This discovery," the Emperor pursued, "opened my eyes as to the underhand method of the Society of Jesus, and I had them watched. If I had found more vocations for the sacerdotal state in France I should have paid no attention to the Jesuits, but, far from that being the case, whatever inducements I held out, even to the exemption from conscription, they were never able to ordain more than three thousand secular priests a year, while seven thousand died. Some Departments furnished no more than twenty candidates for the priesthood. The mountainous districts sent the greatest number of lads to the seminaries. I am in hopes that a state of peace will increase the number."

Before concluding my narrative concerning the Emperor's campaign and journey I must return to the antechamber. The Bulletin had caused such a painful sensation that, as I have already observed, no one dared question me. The only servant [Roustam] who had accompanied us was asleep, and in any case had been forbidden to say anything. The Emperor expressed himself as freely about our reverses as the Bulletin did, but it had been impossible to get news yet of the arrival of the army at Wilna and consequently, like everyone else, he was unaware of the overwhelming disasters that had befallen it. His legs were slightly swollen, his eyes puffy, his complexion that of one whose skin has been affected by the snow, but otherwise he appeared in perfect health. He was so delighted to be once again in Paris that he had no need to compose his features into an appearance of satisfaction; there was no look of a defeated man about him. He worked all that day and even part of the night,¹ sending out orders and imparting to every section of the Administration the energy

Monge, was Director of Studies throughout the Restoration, became professor at the College of France, and was elected Member of the Academy of Sciences, July 10, 1843. Colin, or rather Collin, who had graduated in 1799, had a more obscure career.

¹ December 19. The Emperor worked all that day with Cambacères, Savary, Decrès and Clarke and did not retire to his own apartments until one o'clock in the morning. (Schuermans, *Itinéraire*, 315.)

he desired them to exhibit. It seemed to me that he was quite satisfied with public opinion and the courage it had exhibited on the publication of the Bulletin. His arrival had allayed many fears and diminished the gravest uncertainty; but alas, it could not wipe away the tears of families who had their losses to deplore!

The Emperor talked of his disasters and of the mistake he had made in remaining at Moscow in the same tone as a stranger might have employed.

"The enterprise was successful for eight days," he said. "It is the same with everything in this world; it all depends on the right moment, the right circumstances."

When receiving Decrès and de Cessac, his first words were:

"Well, gentlemen, fortune has dazzled me. I have let it lead me astray instead of following the plan I had in mind, of which I had already spoken to you, Monsieur de Cessac.¹ I went to Moscow. I thought to sign peace there. I stayed there too long. I thought to obtain in one year what could only be gained by two campaigns. I made a grave mistake, but I shall have the means to repair it."

From the very first the outward appearance of Paris afforded him consolation. The effect produced by his return was prodigious. The Emperor perceived this, and after the second day was reassured as to the consequences that his losses might entail. The disaster of Wilna did not cause him to alter his opinion.

"The dreadful Bulletin has done its work," he said to me; "but I observe that my presence affords more satisfaction here than our disaster caused dismay. People are more afflicted than discouraged. Vienna will get to know of this and in three months all will be repaired once more."

If I have omitted many particulars in my relation of conversations with the Emperor during the long time we were alone together, I can at least guarantee the exactness of what

¹ The plan was to take up position at Witepsk, organize the Polish provinces and overwhelm Russia by a deployment of immense forces if these tactics did not lead to peace during the winter. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

I have narrated, frequently, indeed, even to the actual words used. My conscience has not deceived me any more than has my memory. I had long been accustomed to speaking my thoughts freely to the Emperor, without fear of shocking him, and it is only doing him justice to say that during our journey he invited me rather to abandon all restraint than to choose my words. In this he encouraged me by his own freedom in discussion and the confidences he imparted to me. He afforded me proof of what I already had thought, namely, that though he did not always relish the entire truth, he nevertheless esteemed those who spoke it from conscientious motives.

In other circumstances, whenever the conversation touched on some subject he wished to avoid, he would break it off in some way or another; by going away or dismissing me, if it happened to be in his own apartments, or by interruption with instructions about some totally different matter; or sometimes merely remarking: "You don't know anything about it." In the sledge, on the contrary, he was in a constant state of excitement. Was it that his spirit was hurt? He joked and, above all, showed that he needed to open his heart. If some stray remarks proved too unpleasant, he would change the subject for a moment, but would return to it later that day or on the morrow. Throughout this journey the Emperor had the goodness, as I can affirm, to listen to all I had to say with scarcely a feeling of annoyance, and I was able to convince myself from the nature and freedom of his conversation that one could enjoy many rights to his confidence without having any rights to his favour.

The Emperor slept in the sledge as in his bed for several hours at a time. Altogether, his physical organization in no way yielded to his moral. He had all the strength, all the health he needed. It might be said that he could sleep at will.¹ The discomforts of travelling in a sledge, in which he could not lie down and was barely able to stretch his legs, the

¹ "He slept when he wished and how he wished. However much he was in need of sleep, three or four hours sufficed him." (Baron Fain, *Mémoires*, 289.)

fatigue of such a long and difficult journey in such a rigorous season, all this had no other effect on him than a slight swelling of the legs that lasted a few days, rather puffy eyes and a complexion slightly tinged by exposure to the cold.

If I may be permitted to say a word as to what I suffered myself in consequence of this journey, I must say that save for increased thinness I felt no greater inconvenience than the Emperor, although I had not shut my eyes once during those fourteen days and nights; moreover, to my bodily weariness was added the strain that any man of spirit must feel at having his honour charged with such a duty, entrailing the exercise of all his care and foresight. After we reached Paris it was at least a week before I could get any sleep, so worked-up was I.

This narrative having necessitated the mention of some painful—perhaps vexatious—incidents in the life of a great man, it is my duty as a faithful observer who has hidden none of his subject's faults to draw attention in like manner to his qualities; for, as Kléber said to Bonaparte on his return to Cairo after the repulse at Acre: "Do not trouble about that; it is merely a speck of dust on a fine coat." It is my intention, therefore, to enter into details as to the character and habits of the Emperor.

The Emperor was not by nature violent; when he liked, no one could be more completely master of himself.¹ Proof of this can be seen in the fact that, with scarcely any exceptions, and in circumstances calculated to make any man lose his self-control, His Majesty maintained his habitual calm and serious manner, even when he had every cause for complaint. His manner on such occasions was, it is true, very sharp, but it was not disconcerting nor humiliating.

If I sometimes heard him make use of what may be called coarse expressions, it was at the most on five or six occasions, and then only with people whose conduct was such that they had forfeited any claim on his self-control. As to the nature of

¹ "Hot Corsican blood circulated in his veins; but the self-control habitual to one in command had early accustomed him to check his first impulse." (Fain, *Mémoires*, 292.)

those expressions, he did not attach to the words he used the importance and subtle significance that other persons might have done. Perhaps he was lacking in that urbanity, that delicacy of refinement, above all that attitude of tolerance in regard to the small things of life, that in great souls goes by the name of politeness. Custom and tradition demanded that in his own interests our sovereign should exhibit this suavity of manner, but what the Emperor may have lacked in this respect through the circumstances of early education and the habits of childhood was amply compensated by the ability, carried to the highest degree, to act with graciousness where matters of any importance were at stake. Certain verbal expressions that offend our ears did not possess, for the Emperor, the same meaning as we attach to them. He even assumed all the airs of a well-bred man, and was more than ordinarily observant to profit by the manners of those with whom he came in contact. He frequently mentioned with a sort of affectation certain prominent circles that he had frequented in his younger days. He loved to talk of his success with women. If there was a weak side to the magnificent and marvellous character that constituted the Emperor Napoleon it was a certain vanity about the past, as though such a wealth of glory and genius had need of producing its antecedents !

One or two of the somewhat obscene expressions he sometimes permitted himself to use originated, I fancy, in camp during the early years of the Revolution. But no such word escaped him inadvertently and he only spoke thus when he was bantering ; he rarely spoke coarsely when he was angry.

Everybody in the Emperor's *entourage* complained of his usage, of his bearing towards them, of his manner of speaking in their daily communication. By nature or by calculation it was rarely that he exhibited the least appearance of kindness, and when he showed that he was pleased, one might almost say it was in spite of himself.

"The French," he used to say, "are superficial, familiar, and ready to eat out of one's hand. If one wants to avoid the necessity of putting them in their place one must be serious

with them and keep one's own place. Royalty is a part to be played; a sovereign should be always playing it."

He was, therefore, invariably grave and serious, even when he wanted to assume an attitude of benevolence and, as he used to say, lay himself out to cajole people.

If the Emperor had occasion to indicate his displeasure it was most frequently through the medium of a third person. If the individual concerned was a man of some prominence and the occasion sufficiently grave for him personally to show his displeasure, he only did so partially; the brunt of his resentment would fall on some innocent third party, for he liked to give vent to his anger. He was careful with those he talked to, for, as he frankly explained, he never wanted to find himself in the position of not being able to make use of people, or to let anyone ever imagine the door to be finally closed upon him. He used to say that the Government ought to make a principle of never turning anyone away, but on the contrary, of attracting those who held themselves aloof. He told me of marshals, generals, and other very prominent men whom he had thought loyal and counted among his truest friends, who had conspired against him during the Consulate, especially at the time of the Concordat; and he had simply punished them by banishing them from Court for a few months. Acting on this principle, he had very rarely to make an example. It was always, he said, in spite of his inclinations and only when he was forced to do so in the interests of the public that he resorted to even such mild measures, while even then he avoided all recourse to legal convictions.

"It was with profound regret that I adopted a rigorous attitude with General de Marescot," he told me; "but his position as a high official of the Empire, his rank, his ability, increased his crime a hundredfold. Reasons of state forced me to act as I did; I would have pardoned a man less prominent in the public eye."

As for General Dupont, he could not employ harsh enough terms to express his feelings. His chief grievance against him was that article in the capitulation which, he said, saved

the baggage wagons and as a consequence the general's private fortune,¹ but at the same time permitted the dishonouring of the army by authorizing powers of search in the private soldiers' haversacks for proofs of the pillage that was known to be taking place.² He could not remain cool when speaking of this. Convinced as he was that a Council of War would condemn the General, in memory of his gallantry at Ulm³ the Emperor had refrained from doing more than institute a private inquiry. On the very eve of undertaking a great war with Russia and having his army corps separated by great distances, he had been obliged to rake up this affair which he had thought finished, in order to establish strict laws to regulate the behaviour of those who might be tempted like the general, to pass beneath the Caudine fork.⁴ It was at this period, and for the same reason, that instructions were issued

¹ Article 11 of the Capitulation of July 21, 1808: "General officers of less rank one carriage and one baggage wagon, officers of less rank one carriage, that shall not be subject to any examination."

² Article 15 of the above Capitulation: "On several occasions, and notably at the assault of Cordova, a number of soldiers in defiance of their generals' orders and their officers' attempts to restrain them, indulged in such excesses as are only to be expected when towns offer resistance up to the very moment of being entered; generals and officers will therefore take such measures as are necessary to discover the whereabouts of such church plate as has been taken, and to restore it if it can be laid hands on."

³ Dupont had given brilliant proof of his ability to manœuvre at the Battles of Haslach, in October 1805.

⁴ A court of inquiry appointed by the Emperor in September 1808, considered that the generals inculpated ought to appear before a special commission. Generals Dupont and Vedel, arrested when they landed in France, were confined in the Abbaye and then set at liberty. But in February 1812, Dupont was arrested again and summoned before an extraordinary council presided over by Cambacérès, with Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely acting as his advocate. On March 1 the Council cashiered the vanquished warrior of Baylen, and Napoleon had him imprisoned in the fort of Joux, and in May 1813 placed under surveillance at Dreux. It was there that the provisional government sent for him, in April 1814, to make him Commissioner of War.

regarding the defence of fortresses and the responsibilities of commanding officers.¹

The Emperor showed favour to neither officer nor private; nevertheless he was no stickler for discipline and shut his eyes to irregularities. He did not like to be so much as told of any infringement of rules so long as they did not go beyond excesses in eating or drinking. He was ready to grant that his system of warfare could not admit of severe discipline, as the troops were forced to subsist without any proper rationing. But if he winked at irregularities committed by the troops in times of plenty, he was severe when the same things occurred in the days of want. He permitted no complaints and often cited the example of the Roman legions. In the Eylau campaign those mighty examples of valour and endurance served as texts for all his conversations throughout the winter. He tried to prove that it was possible to do without anything. He sought to model us on the example of the heroes, to excite us by those noble memories and famous examples. The French will fight well without being worked up by excitement; they know how to suffer privation and discomfort, even how to die of hunger, so long as glory marches by the side of danger; but when the guns cease to thunder, and they are fighting a rear-guard action, in full retreat, their courage goes to their legs and from heroes they turn into ordinary men.

The Emperor condemned more than anyone else the crimes of the Revolution and even the Revolution itself. On this account he felt a certain aversion towards those men of the old Court who had taken part in it. He often spoke of them to me with unfeigned disgust. The organization of the peerage and that great endowment in expiation of the crimes of the Revolution that took its form in the magnificent structure of the Madeleine, which was destined as a temple of glory, were

¹ "Imperial decree determining the cases when generals and military commandants may capitulate, and the manner of judging and punishing those who capitulate in circumstances where no capitulation is permissible. At the Palace of Saint-Cloud, May 1, 1812."

two ideas that he placed in the forefront and that occupied much of his thought. He planned the erection of a monument to Louis XVI and his Queen, as well as others to commemorate the many victims who had perished in those dreadful times.

The Emperor never pardoned men who used their official position as a means of making money, of squeezing the districts under their administration or, what was worse, of trading on their posts to gain credit. He spoke with contempt of Marshal Brune,¹ and never mentioned M. de Bourrienne² without calling him "that rascal." Nor were they the only ones to whom he applied such terms.

The Emperor Napoleon was what in the days of the Revolution would have been called an "aristocrat." His own observations would lead one to imagine that he was of this turn of mind even before his accession to power, although he had not always based his conduct upon it. No royalist in the Court at Hartwell³ could have spoken of the Bourbons, of the Revolution and its woes, with deeper feeling or more sincere regret; but such remarks were invariably coupled with the reflexions of a statesman and a firm resolve to make the utmost of all the Revolution had produced that was great and useful.

"It was," said he, "an era that gave new life to France when she had been stricken prostrate by a succession of favourites,

¹ Brune, Marshal of the Empire, May 19, 1804, had been placed in command of the Hanseatic towns by a decree of December 13, 1806, and relieved of his duties in September 1807, on the official pretext that he had omitted the Emperor's name in a convention signed with Sweden. Napoleon left him without employment until the Hundred Days.

² Louis Antoine Fauvalet de Charbonnières de Bourrienne, born at Sens, July 9, 1769, had been for a long time Secretary to the First Consul, who had been obliged to send him away on account of his plundering propensities. Cf. *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, I, 105.

³ Hartwell House, in Buckinghamshire, 38 miles north-west of London, where the Count of Provence took up his residence in 1811.

of kings' mistresses and all the abuses that followed in their train. To end all that it was necessary to pool all opinion and to make use of men the most violently opposed to one another. The most conclusive proof of success is when the government feels itself strong; it is then that it imparts impulse instead of receiving it."

As a general rule he held men in but little estimation. He rarely had a word of praise, even for those who had done the most, except at the actual moment of their prowess or unless he wanted them to strive still further. On the other hand, doubtless in some spirit of justice, he was equally sparing with his blame and scarcely ever uttered a word of censure, unless for a very grave fault. No doubt the thought that they might do better later on was in some degree the reason for this apparent indulgence; for although he seldom showed himself rigorous he did not forget. If for some serious reason he removed a man from his post, it was only for a time.

"A sovereign," he said, "ought never to deprive men of all hope of pardon."

His sensibilities were wounded by any offence against refinement, any unhandsome behaviour or lack of respect, although his own early upbringing was in no way remarkable in this regard, while the constant necessity of playing a diplomatic part precluded him from exhibiting those qualities that he demanded from others. In his private conversation he continually complained of people, particularly of those about him, even of the Prince of Neuchâtel and of Duroc, of his ministers and the heads of public services, just as though he were badly served. I was often able to judge from the manner in which the Emperor spoke to me of others how he spoke of me to them. But it would be ungrateful of me to forget that in my absence he often praised the service of which I had the direction. He really adopted this attitude for the double purpose of stimulating zeal in his servants and of inducing them to criticize each other. He liked to set the various heads of administration in opposition to one another, and would not have minded in the least had they all been at loggerheads. I

often noticed that he did his utmost to make Duroc and me jealous of one another—even enemies.¹

His low opinion of men in general rarely made the Emperor demand of them greater abilities or virtues than they actually possessed. He never forgot, but on the other hand he never bore rancour. No one suffered from his personal dislike. His interests, his policy were ever paramount. It may be said that he had no marked likes or dislikes where minor matters were concerned, and everything goes to show that this spirit of indulgence or indifference arose out of the poor opinion he had of men in general. If motives of policy often made him show his clemency, his personal feelings also tended in the same direction, and they carried more weight than he would have cared to avow. Another and very cogent cause for his clemency was the belief that all men act as circumstances impel them.

There can be few people about whom the Emperor has not spoken to me at one time or another, from the Empress herself down to the most insignificant individuals; so I frequently had occasion to observe that nothing escaped him. He viewed men's private lives as unsympathetically as he did their public actions. He saw everything in the light of self-interest. Always consciously playing the part of Emperor, he imagined everyone else to be acting an equally studied part towards himself. His first impression was always that of distrust and this inspired his instinctive attitude. This lasted but for a moment, but the fact remained that his first thoughts were at least harsh if not actually offensive. Always suspicious that your views or any proposition you put forward had some personal or hidden end, whether you were friend or enemy he viewed you with the same suspicion. I have so often experienced this that I can speak with full authority. The Emperor thought and said on all occasions that ambition and self-interest are the motives of every action. Rarely would he admit that anyone had done well solely from a sense

¹ Duroc being Lord High Steward and Caulaincourt being Master of the Horse, their respective functions brought them into continual contact.

of honour or delicacy; yet he noticed people who appeared to be actuated by those sentiments, or guided by a perception of duty. He made a silent note of it but never gave any outward indication. Often has he given me cause to wonder whether sovereigns realize that they, too, have neighbours to whom they owe a duty.

The chivalry and courtesy so characteristic of the French temperament, the affable and benevolent tone adopted by men of princely position in conversation with their subjects even when they are signing a minister's letter of dismissal, all these graces were wholly lacking in the Emperor. He only dissimulated when very important matters were at stake; conscious, no doubt, of his own superiority in strength and character he took no trouble to hide his feelings in the ordinary affairs of life, nor sometimes even in more weighty affairs. He was often indiscreet. He generally said more than he meant to say or ought to have said when anything was under discussion. Had he but exhibited even a shade of that particular courtesy with which French life is tinted, he would have been adored, he would have turned all heads. Yet he possessed one great and rare quality: he disliked changes. He kept to the men he employed and preferred using a bad instrument to changing it for a new one. You may not have been made much of in the Emperor's service, but at least you were sure that no intrigue or plot behind your back would poison his mind against you. As the Government had but one impulse and fixed maxims upon which to work, and as the Emperor governed entirely by himself, the terms of office enjoyed by the ministers were dependent on no change in the system. The more you were maligned to the Emperor the more persistent he was in proving the truth as to the faults alleged against you, and the more obstinate he showed himself in retaining you near him.

"I am my own minister," he often used to say. "It is I who conduct affairs. I am powerful enough to get the very best out of mediocre men. Probity, discretion and activity are all that I demand of a man."

In himself the Emperor was exceedingly good-natured.

His attitude to the Empress was tender and affectionate. Long before his marriage he had been passionately in love with the Empress Josephine and to the end he retained a deep attachment to her. He liked to talk in praise of her charms and goodness long after he had ceased to see her. No woman ever made such an impression on him; according to the Emperor, she was all the Graces personified.

It is a mistake to think he had many mistresses. He lost his head sometimes, it is true, but it was rarely that he felt any need of love or, indeed, any pleasure in it. He lived too much in the public eye to indulge, even secretly, in a distraction which actually afforded him but little amusement and lasted but for a moment. For some days, however, he really was in love with Madame D.¹ Partly as a pastime and partly as a pretext for breaking with the Empress Josephine, he had an affair with Madame Gax.² and with Madame Mat.³ during the time that elapsed between the divorce and his marriage to the Archduchess. During the last years of the Empress Josephine he had Mademoiselle George⁴ and a few other

¹ This initial stands for Madame Duchâtel (Marie Antoinette Adele Papin), born at Aire (Landes), July 4, 1782, died at Paris, May 20, 1860, married in 1802 to Charles Jacques Nicholas Duchâtel, thirty years older than herself. From 1801 to 1815 he was Director-General of Registrations and Customs. Cf. *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*, I, 202; *Mémoires de Mme. de Rémusat*, II, 87; and Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, XI, 137.

² Caulaincourt is referring to Carlotta Gazzani, née Bartoni, called also Baroness Brentano, who was appointed reader to the Empress Josephine after the coronation in Milan. From 1805 to 1808 she was Napoleon's mistress at very irregular intervals. Cf. F. Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, 115.

³ Caulaincourt is alluding to Madame Mathis, for whom the Emperor had a passing fancy at the time the Court was beginning to talk about the divorce. She was one of Princess Pauline's ladies.—Christine Ghilini, died December 10, 1841, married François Hilaire Scipion Marie Mathis, Count de Cacciorna, born at Bra (Piedmont), March 26, 1784. She was Napoleon's mistress from August to October 1807.

⁴ The reference is to the famous member of the Comédie Française, Marguerite Josephine Weimer, known as Mademoiselle George. The tragedienne's relations with Napoleon went back

women, as much from curiosity as from a wish to revenge himself for the scenes of jealousy these infidelities caused. Mademoiselle W. found favour in his eyes at Warsaw;¹ he had a son by her and remembered her with greater attachment than any other of his mistresses. But none of these passing fancies distracted him for one brief moment from affairs of State.

The Emperor was so eager to recount his amorous successes that one might almost have imagined he only engaged in them for the sake of talking about them. The Empress was his chief confidante. Woe to the complaisant beauty if she was not as shapely as the Venus de Medicis, for no detail escaped his critical eye or was spared in the minutely circumstantial narrative he loved to make to certain persons to whom he liked to vaunt his success. The Empress Josephine received that very same evening a full account of the conquest of Madame D. On the morning after the first rendezvous the Empress told me all about it, without omitting one single circumstance that might either flatter or shock the fair lady. That grenadier in the camp at Boulogne was not far wrong when he answered one of his comrades who had asked whether *le Petit Caporal* had any children: "You fool, don't you know that he keeps his private parts in his head?"

The Emperor needed much sleep, but he could sleep when he wanted to, by day as well as at night.² The eve of a battle never disturbed his rest, and even in the heat of the action, if he came to the conclusion that no decisive move could be made for an hour or so, he would stretch himself out on the ground on his bearskin and fall into a profound slumber until he was called. I myself witnessed such an occasion at the

further than Caulaincourt suspected, as they commenced in Nivose, Year X, and ceased when Mlle. George fled to Russia, May 11, 1808. Cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et les femmes*, 102.

¹ Madame Walewska. Napoleon saw Madame Walewska for the first time at Bronie, January 1, 1807.

² "It was his habit to sleep about seven hours out of the twenty-four; but it was always in several naps, broken when he desired, night as well as day." (Fain, *Mémoires*, 290.)

Battle of Bautzen. It was between half-past eleven and one o'clock,¹ and the Emperor had inspected the whole position.

"Things must be allowed to take their course," he said. "It will be a couple of hours before I can strike a hard blow."

He slept for more than an hour.

On a campaign he was wakened for everything. Even the Prince of Neuchâtel, who received all despatches and knew His Majesty's plans, decided nothing. The Emperor always arose at eleven o'clock at night, or at the latest, midnight, when the first despatches from the army corps came to hand. He worked for two or three hours, often even longer, comparing the despatches, tracing out on the map the various movements of troops and issuing his orders. He dictated everything to the Major-General, or to a secretary, and the orders were transmitted by the Prince of Neuchâtel. Sometimes he wrote personally to the army corps commanders in order to compel their attention when something of great importance was contemplated, but this did not prevent the formal orders passing through the routine of the General Staff.

The Emperor occupied himself with the most minute details. He wanted everything to bear the imprint of his genius. He would send for me to receive his orders for headquarters, for the orderly officers, for his staff officers, for the letters, for the couriers, postal service, etc. The commanding officer of the Guard; the controller of the army commissariat; Larrey, the excellent surgeon-general, all were summoned at least once a day. Nothing escaped his solicitude. Indeed, his foresight might well be called by the name of solicitude, for no detail seemed too humble to receive his attention. Whatever might contribute to the success or well-being of his soldiers appeared to him worthy of daily care. Never can it be said of the Emperor that he was lulled into slumber by

¹ "The Emperor, who had passed the night giving orders, yielded to his need for sleep on the slope of a ravine, in the midst of the Duke of Ragusa's batteries; he is awakened, draws out his watch, and directing the fire, proclaims a victory." (*Fain, Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 409.)

prosperity, for however great a victory he may have won, at the very moment that success was assured he occupied himself with as many precautions as he would have taken had it been a defeat.

Even when chasing the enemy helter-skelter before him, or in the heat of one of his greatest victories, no matter how weary the Emperor was he always had an eye for ground that could be held in the event of a reverse. In this respect he had an astonishing memory for localities. The topography of a country seemed to be modelled in relief in his head. Never did any man combine such a memory with a more creative genius. He seemed to extract men, horses and guns from the very bowels of the earth. The distinctive numbers of his regiments, his army service companies, his baggage battalions, were all classified in his brain most marvellously. His memory sufficed for everything. He knew where each one was, when it started, when it should arrive at its destination. His memory was more trustworthy than any staff musters and rolls, but this spirit of orderliness to the end that all should co-operate to achieve his purpose, that all should be created and organized with the final aim in view, did not go beyond that point. All would have been well if the solution of the problems of the campaign could have been secured by gaining two or three battles: he was so completely master of his chess-board that he would certainly have won them. But his creative genius had no knowledge of conserving its forces. Always improvising, in a few days he would consume, exhaust and disorganize by the rapidity of his marches, the whole of what his genius had created. If a thirty-days' campaign did not produce the results of a year's fighting the greater part of his calculations were upset by the losses he suffered, for everything was done so rapidly and unexpectedly, the chiefs acting under him had so little experience, showed so little care and were, in addition so spoiled by former successes, that everything was disorganized, wasted and thrown away.

The Emperor's genius had proved itself in the achievement of such prodigious successes that to him was left the entire responsibility of winning a battle. It was sufficient to be on

the spot in time for the action; after the victory had been won there was certain to be plenty of time to rest and reorganize, so no one cared very much what his losses had been or what he had had to abandon, for it was rare that the Emperor demanded an account. The prompt results of the Italian and Austrian campaigns and the resources those countries offered to the invader spoiled everyone, down to the less important commanders, for more rigorous warfare. The habit of victory cost us dear when we got to Russia and even dearer when we were in retreat; the glorious habit of marching ever forward made us veritable schoolboys when it came to retreating. The Emperor was so used to having his troops at hand and was always so eager to take the offensive that the roads became hopelessly blocked and the columns inextricably confused. In this matter men and horses alike were reduced to a state of exhaustion.

Never was a retreat worse planned, or carried out with less discipline; never did convoys march so badly. Precautionary calculations and dispositions had no place in the arrangements that were made and it was to this lack of forethought that we owed a great part of our disaster. When it came to any retrograde movement the Emperor would take no decision until the very last moment, which was invariably too late. His reasoning powers were never able to gain the mastery over his repugnance to retreat, while his staff, who were far too much in the habit of not doing the slightest thing without the impulse from him who planned everything, took no steps whatever to organize affairs. Shaped and drilled into being no more than an obedient instrument, the staff could do nothing of itself for the general good. The Emperor would not even agree to the most essential sacrifices to preserve what was undoubtedly indispensable. Throughout that long retreat from Russia he was as uncertain and as undecided on the last day as he had been on the first, although he was in no more doubt as to the imperative necessity of this retreat than was anyone else. Constantly deluding himself with hopes of being able to call a halt and take up position, he obstinately retained an immense amount of material that ultimately

caused the loss of everything. He had a wholly incalculable antipathy for any thoughts or ideas about what he disliked. Fortune had so often smiled upon him that he could never bring himself to believe that she might prove fickle.

The Emperor was a quick eater and gulped down his food so hastily that it seemed as though he chewed it very little if at all. Innumerable tales have been told as to his mode of living. The truth is that he only partook of two meals a day. His preferences were for beef or mutton, beans, lentils or potatoes, generally in the form of a salad. It was a rare thing for him to finish a bottle of wine in the day; he preferred Chambertin. After lunch and dinner he took a cup of watered coffee, and this was the only thing he was particular about. In the Egyptian campaign he had acquired the habit of taking it very strong, and he liked Mocha best. During the Russian campaign, even in the retreat, every day he was able to have his wine, his coffee and such food as he was accustomed to having served on his table.

I cannot close my remarks on this campaign without speaking of the King of Naples, who had so much to do with our success and our failure. The bellicose nature of that prince often led him, even unconsciously, into pandering to the Emperor's overpowering passion for going to war; yet he perceived the ill consequences of this and with some people even went so far as to deplore them. General Belliard, chief of his staff, had no illusions on this point; being a man of considerable nobility of character he did not hide his thoughts from the King nor hesitate to give utterance to his forebodings. But the King's best resolutions vanished into thin air the moment he saw the enemy or heard the thunder of a gun; he was no longer able to curb his enthusiasm. In his imagination he had already gained the victory which his courage assured him was for the taking, and such illusions born of valour were transmitted to staff headquarters, to be turned into reality by the illusions born of genius. Always noble, generous, eager to help anyone, humane towards a vanquished foe, this Prince added to those qualities that distinguish valiant men a real eagerness to be well-spoken of

and to pass for one of those heroes of chivalry who used to stretch out so gallantly a helping-hand to those whom they had overthrown. He was not afraid of the Emperor's ill-humour, but if he ventured to tell His Majesty the truth he was repulsed so coldly that he held his tongue. The King's sole aim was to please his master.

No one could have been more obliging than the King of Naples, even to those of whom he might well consider that he had a right to complain. He loved the Emperor, saw his faults and appreciated the consequences they brought in their train, but there was in his character a disposition to flatter, imbibed, no doubt, with his mother's milk, which paralysed his good intentions even more effectually than the influence that the Emperor so long exercised over him. His unfortunate passion for dressing-up made him appear the most gorgeous of sovereigns, the king of fine fellows, the tinsel monarch of a raree-show. His uniforms, his plume, his boots made after an antique pattern, all appeared to him as invaluable accessories in the art of seducing the fair ones. With this paraphernalia he really thought himself the most irresistible of men, though actually he was so handsome that no one needed such trappings less than he did. The Emperor, who thought it all very ridiculous, and told him so loudly and often, was not really put out at a whim that called forth the admiration of the troops all the more in that it attracted the attention of the enemy, and gave the King occasion to brave more danger than anyone else.

I now revert to particulars of what happened in Paris, and the news of the army that came to hand after our return. The Grand Marshal and the Count Lobau arrived forty-eight hours after the Emperor, as well as Baron Fain.¹ Other

¹ According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 7), Duroc and Lobau started from Smorgoni some hours after the Emperor and got to Paris forty-eight hours after Napoleon, as Caulaincourt says. But Fain adds—and he was well situated to know the facts—that the office carriage, in which were the secretaries Fain and Mounier, the engineer cartographer Baclet d'Albe and the surgeon Yvan, did not reach its destination until three days later.

officers came in succession, including the Emperor's aides-de-camp who had been sent on various errands. Every day the couriers brought news of the army and the Emperor learned of the disaster of Wilna, which had been abandoned, rather than evacuated, on the 10th.¹ It is impossible to have any idea of the disorder that had reigned in that city since the entry of the army. The Emperor was overwhelmed with the news, and sent for me at once.

"Well, Caulaincourt," he greeted me, "so the King has left Wilna. He has made no dispositions; the army, even the Guard, have run away before a few Cossacks. The cold has made them all lose their heads and so complete has been the disorder that even without any question of being pursued they have abandoned all the artillery and vehicles² on the mountain outside Wilna. Never has there been such a rout, such utter stupidity. What a hundred plucky men might have saved by their own exertions has been snatched from before the very noses of thousands of brave lads, and all through Murat's fault. A captain of light infantry would have commanded the army better."

I gave His Majesty the letter from M. de Saluces.³ He read it several times, being, I saw, quite unable to give any credence to the despatches sent by the King and the Major-General, upon whom he concentrated all his displeasure. The amazement, amounting to stupefaction, with which the Emperor read this letter to me and recounted the details that

¹ December 10, 1812.

² Held up by the ice-covered roads near Ponary, "all the carriages were piled one on the other; part of the treasury was pillaged; caissons, baggage, artillery, all was lost, Ney's rear-guard had to set fire to it all when they came up." (Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *La Campagne de 1813*, I, 73.)

³ Andrew Annibal Saluzzo (de Saluces), born at Turin, November 30, 1776, died May 27, 1852, was equerry to the Emperor and in this capacity accompanied the general headquarters to Russia. The reference is probably to one of Saluzzo's reports, as he had taken over the duties of Master of the Horse when Caulaincourt left with the Emperor.

he had learned demonstrated most amply that he had been perfectly sincere when he assured me during our journey, and even after our arrival, that he would hold Wilna. His chagrin at the loss of Wilna was all the greater in that he had been so confident that it would be held; for the first few moments after receiving the news he felt the blow more keenly than when he had heard of the loss of Minsk and Borissow,¹ although he had then been obliged to retire between the guns of three armies.² But it was incumbent on the Emperor that he should show a brave face in front of his keenly attentive courtiers; and by way of putting his back to the storm he immediately set about most energetically to take the necessary steps to repair the damage. Continuous arrivals from the army making it impossible to conceal for any length of time the disgraceful particulars of what had taken place, His Majesty gave permission on the morrow for all the letters brought in by the couriers to be distributed to their various destinations. I will now recount what the Emperor told me concerning this event.

On their arrival at Wilna the army commanders lost no time in installing themselves in comfortable houses, resting and getting warm once more. The junior officers and the privates, left to themselves, suffering agonies with the cold which had become more intense than ever and for three days had been more than twenty degrees below zero [C.] also betook themselves to shelter, and left most of their outposts unguarded. The King of Naples, who ought to have been with the advance-guard some leagues from Wilna, was in the city. Everyone followed the King's example and shut himself close within doors; with the result that the Cossacks were able to come right up to the outlying suburbs of the city. The

¹ Tchitchagoff had seized Minsk on November 16 and the bridgehead of Borissow on November 21. "Bonaparte," says Clausewitz (*La Campagne de 1812*, 70), "could have considered himself lucky if, after the loss of Minsk and Borissow, he was able to find any place to cross the Beresina and thence march straight on Wilna."

² Those of Kutusoff, Wittgenstein and Tchitchagoff.

intense cold prevented our troops, who were sheltering in houses or huddled round fires, from getting hold of their arms and so they had to retire before the Cossacks closer into the town itself. Encouraged by these successes, however meagre they might seem, the enemy grew bolder, and sent out detachments to ascertain in what strength we were holding our posts in the suburbs. Meeting with little or no resistance, they began to harass us and increase the disorder that was already reigning. When they saw how successful the Cossacks had been, the Russian infantry also drew closer to the city. A few guns mounted on sledges frightened some of our outposts more seriously than they harmed them; but eventually the confusion in Wilna grew to such proportions that it was decided to evacuate the place.¹

The utter improvidence that had been shown in every direction since the Emperor's departure ended in the loss of everything. Artillery and convoys became inextricably confused on the mountain two leagues from Wilna. The horses had not been re-shod and in any event were so weak that they could not climb the hill and were practically useless. The first vehicles had blocked up the whole road. Fifty courageous men with a few properly organized teams could have saved the situation, for the enemy had not yet entered the town and in any case was not in considerable strength. But the senior officers acted each on his own account, and the headquarters staff laid no plans whatever. The confusion increased with every moment that passed; no one thought of anything but himself, all tried to get out of the muddle by some side path that should lead over the mountain; but the first-comers so completely blocked the road in their vain attempts to climb the hill that those who followed were held up and the whole road was impassable. While this was going on the King, who thought he had forty-eight hours in which to carry out the

¹ Murat arrived in Wilna at 11 o'clock on the morning of December 8th and started out again on the 9th. "The enemy entered during the 10th as there was nothing in front of him." (Le Lorgne d'Iderville writing to Maret, Gumbinnen, December 18, 1812, published by G. Fabry, *Napoléon, Murat et le roi de Prusse*, 15.)

evacuation, observed how little our troops were disposed to resist the Russian infantry attacks, and taking alarm at this he abandoned the town in all haste. From that moment the evacuation became a stampede.

It would be difficult to convey any idea of the confusion that reigned.¹ Not that there was any valid reason for so much haste and alarm, as was shown by the fact that a small infantry squad, left in charge of a post and there forgotten, boldly crossed the entire city an hour and a half after our precipitate departure, and rejoined the main army unmolested by the few parties of enemy troops who had made their way in and were too amazed at their own success to oppose this gallant little party.

The Emperor's carriages, which had reached Wilna safe and sound, followed the artillery and when they reached the mountain shared the common fate. All M. de Saluce's zeal and energy failed to make a passage through the welter of confusion, so he was forced to abandon them. Only sumpter-mules and horses could be saved, and it was very difficult to get even them and a few teams through the blockage. The money of the pay-chest was loaded on horses and not a penny of it was lost. The King and the other generals having gone on ahead no one took the trouble to collect together even a hundred plucky fellows, which was all that was needed to save the situation by arresting the pursuit led by a few Cossacks. Had this been done it would have given time to clear the confusion on the mountain road. The cold was intense, and that day it seemed to have numbed the brains as well as the courage of our troops, who on so many previous occasions had not allowed themselves to be thwarted by difficulties such as these. Woe to those who had no gloves to put on; they ran the risk of losing a finger or two from frost-bite.

The Emperor was profoundly affected by the manner in which Wilna had been abandoned. He could not believe it was true, upsetting as it did all his calculations and contradicting all probabilities. Two days later he learned what had

¹ See *Mémoires du sergent Bourgogne*, 1896, 232.

taken place at Kovno and the behaviour of the Guard.¹ He spoke to me about it on several occasions, in a tone of real grief. He felt it all the more in that he liked to recall, when speaking of this corps's exemplary behaviour during the retreat, the fine appearance and smartness they had always preserved.

Thus the moment for the most bitter and searching trial had come, when all illusions were dispelled in one devastating moment. Overwhelmed by the catastrophe, the Prince of Neuchâtel fell ill of chagrin and exhaustion. The King of Naples's inability to cope with the situation, said the Emperor, had amazed everyone. Each fresh despatch brought particulars of some fresh misfortune. All the letters from the army accused the King of lack of foresight. To deal with such difficulties, they said, someone was needed with strength of character to rise above all misfortunes and misadventures, and the King, though gallant enough in the heat of action, was in reality the weakest and most undecided of men.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was overwhelmed with despair, reproaching himself with having contributed to the selection of such a leader; but his regrets were too late and could do no good. The nature of the most energetic men, even those of sound common sense who would in other circumstances have triumphed over a host of difficulties, seemed, as the Emperor said, benumbed with cold. Weariness, discouragement, the effects of cold and the fears of being frozen to death were brought to the Emperor's notice in a very marked way. Reports were sent to him concerning various officers of his Guard and even the Artillery who had shown the utmost activity and zeal as far as Wilna, whither they had taken their

¹ "At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 12th the Guard and the whole crowd that accompanied it for protection, drew near to Kovno. That town, already full of unattached soldiers, thereupon became thronged at every point and the greatest disorder soon displayed itself. The shops were pillaged and fires broke out in various quarters." (Marquis de Chambray, *Histoire de l'expédition de Russie*, III, 135.) See also Berthier's letter to the Emperor, from Wirballen, December 16, 1812, published by Colonel Frédéric Reboul, *La Campagne de 1813*, I, 419.

companies or batteries practically intact and by their general behaviour had merited the commendation of their commanding officers, but when it came to leaving Wilna these same officers, it was reported, refused to go a step further, declaring loudly that they had no more strength and would rather stay and be made prisoners than perish with hunger and cold upon the road. Incidents such as these struck the Emperor more forcibly than many losses. He longed, more than I can describe, to have news of the Duke of Bassano,¹ and, above all, for him to arrive in Paris so that he might feel assured that the forged Russian assignats left at Wilna had been destroyed.

"They are quite capable of having forgotten them," he said, "or of having left to someone else the task of destroying them; that person will have tried to make something for himself out of them, and if the Russians find them it will be somewhat more than disagreeable."

The Emperor told me that he knew from a private source that some of these assignats had been circulated since his departure from Wilna and his uneasiness was largely due to what he had heard on this score. I must confess that this piece of confidential information so overwhelmed me at first that I scarcely understood what the Emperor was saying, and he was obliged to repeat his remarks.

As soon as he learned of the evacuation of Wilna the Emperor realized all the consequences that would inevitably follow. The Duchy was imperilled, where would the disorder stop? It was difficult to foresee what would happen, for despatches from the King and the Major-General mentioned no reassuring plans. Ever prompt at coming to a decision as soon as he saw that things had got beyond any possibility of being remedied, the Emperor said:

"It is a torrent and we must let it sweep by. It will stop of itself in a day or two."

He observed that there was all kinds of sickness about and

¹ Maret had moved from Wilna to Warsaw, where he arrived in the morning of December 16th. He returned to Paris early in January 1813.

that this retreating movement would be good in that it would remove the troops from infected ~~carcas~~ ^{carcasses}. It was even possible that the Russians would be attacked by sickness themselves and the advance of their army checked. Despite all our misfortunes, the position of our forces on December 21st could give ground for some hopes of seeing an end to this disorder and disorganization, for the army had its supports and what had wrought us such harm was no doubt equally exhausting to the enemy and seriously detrimental to any offensive movement on his part.

General headquarters¹ were at Königsberg, covered by the 10th Corps stationed at Tilsit. The 1st Corps (Prince of Eckmühl) was at Thorn; the 2nd at Marienburg; the 3rd (Duke of Elchingen) at Elbing; the 4th (Viceroy) at Marienwerder; the 5th at Warsaw; the 6th at Plock; the 7th at Wengrow; the 9th at Danzig.

The Austrians occupied Ostrolenka and Broki.

As I have already said the moment for the heaviest blows had come. The losses of Wilna and the retreat into Prussia were only the prelude. Treason had been waiting the signal given by our latest disasters to force its way into the very ranks of our brave fellows. On December 30th General York, the Prussian, signed a treaty with the Russians and shamefully deserted the Duke of Taranto.² This unparalleled defection uncovered our left and endangered the 10th Corps, which thus found itself threatened by greatly superior forces, as Wittgenstein came up to join the divisions already facing the Duke of Taranto, who had left Mittau on the 19th and was to cross the Niemen on the 29th.³ In these circumstances the King

¹ The rallying points had been detailed by Berthier on December 17th. Cf. Colonel F. Reboul, *La Campagne de 1813*, I, 88.

² The Convention of Tauroggen, signed at the mill of Poscherum. The following day the Prussian troops were withdrawn beyond the Niemen. Cf. J. d'Ussel, *La Defection de la Prussie en 1813*, 113.

³ Cf. Macdonald, *Souvenirs*, 184. The Duke of Taranto arrived in Tilsit on December 28th and that same day began to clear the Niemen.

of Naples ordered the army to cross the Vistula and moved his headquarters to Posen.¹ It was at this juncture that he resigned his command of the army.² The Emperor gave it to the Viceroy. A note to this effect inserted in the *Moniteur* leaves no doubt as to what the Emperor thought of his brother-in-law's desertion in such critical circumstances.³ The King crossed Germany in disguise and made his way to Naples.⁴

One of the first things the Emperor looked into on his return to Paris was the full details of the Malet conspiracy and the degree of blame attaching to M. Frochot, Prefect of the Seine, whose rank as Counsellor of State and the importance of whose position rendered him in the Emperor's eyes more guilty than any other person. His Majesty liked Frochot. The Duke of Bassano, who was his friend, had always represented him as one of the most loyal and devoted of men, and the Emperor considered him very efficient. The memory of this and the confidence he had always placed in him only added to his irritation against this official who, after an inquiry and a note signed by all sections of the Council of State (summoned and sitting separately on purpose to try one of their members), was adjudged as having failed in firmness and decision in carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to him.⁵ Notwithstanding this, no one doubted his attachment to the

¹ Murat moved his headquarters from Königsberg to Elbing on January 3rd 1813, and installed it at Posen on January 15th.

² January 16, 1813.

³ The Emperor learned of Murat's departure on January 22nd. The *Moniteur* of January 27th published this note: "Owing to indisposition the King of Naples has been obliged to relinquish the command of the army, and has placed it in the hands of the Viceroy. This latter is more accustomed to high administration and enjoys the entire confidence of the Emperor."

⁴ He reached Caserta on January 31st.

⁵ The findings of the inquiry were published in the *Moniteur* of December 25th at the same time as the decree by which Frochot was deprived of his functions as a Counsellor of State and Prefect of the Seine. Cf. Pasquier, *Mémoires*, II, 48.

Emperor, though His Majesty was none the less incensed at his conduct and ingratitude.

"An example must be made," he said. "Not of the man, but of the Counsellor of State. It is time that people learned, if they have forgotten, what it means to observe an oath of loyalty. The principles of that must be finally fixed."

So much importance did the Emperor attach to the conduct of the first magistrate of Paris, as he called him, that he made allusions to it in his reply to the addresses of congratulation offered him on his return by the Senate¹ and other bodies.

The Emperor's presence in Paris calmed the liveliest apprehensions. The bustle occasioned by his various arrangements made a diversion and a lively activity was apparent in all quarters. France was one vast workshop, and this moment must have been the most comforting and happiest in his life, for instead of demanding an account from him, the entire French nation overlooked his reverse and men vied with one another in showing their zeal and devotion. It was as glorious an example of the French character as it was a personal triumph for the Emperor, who with amazing energy directed all the resources of which his genius was capable into the organization and guidance of this great national endeavour.

Things seemed to come into existence by enchantment. The millions of money in the private treasury and coming from the Extraordinary Domain were taken from the Tuileries' cellars and lent to the State Treasury.² The Emperor had no thought but for France; his mind was solely occupied in

¹ "Timid and unworthy soldiers cause a State to lose its independence; but timid and careless magistrates rob the law of its majesty, the throne of its rights, and destroy the entire fabric of social order." (Reply to the address of the Senate, December 20, 1812. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19389.)

² The Extraordinary Treasury amounted to 325 millions, of which 267 millions were tied up in loans to the cities of Bordeaux and Paris, or to various States. There remained, therefore, 58 millions. As to the Privy Treasury, forming Napoleon's personal fortune, it amounted to 135 millions, of which 35 millions were tied up in various ways. In the Tuileries' cellars, therefore, there actually existed 158 millions in gold.

co-ordinating everything that might help her to appear, before long, once again in the theatre of war, with sufficient force at her disposal to enable her to discuss without undue eagerness the terms of an honourable peace.

The Emperor made an outward show of being actuated by a desire for peace, and many people were inclined to profit by the similar anxiety for peace that must have prevailed in Austria. A cessation of warfare was clearly so necessary for everyone that it was impossible to doubt the feasibility of bringing it about if the Emperor were moderate in his views; and that moment seemed the most propitious for gaining peace at the cost of a few sacrifices. It must be observed (and history will, no doubt, take note of the circumstance) that nothing can give a more just notion of the strength of character and tenacity of purpose with which everyone credited the Emperor than the fact that despite our reverses, despite the success of the Russians and the treachery of the Prussians, the public opinion of the Emperor's mettle was such that it was generally supposed that any difficulties in the way of moderation in the terms of peace would come from him rather than from Russia, although her pretensions and demands for vengeance were likely to increase, as her army, having passed over the frontier on to foreign soil, was no longer a charge upon her and the need for treating for peace was correspondingly less urgent.

The King of Prussia had greatly disapproved of the conduct of his generals and the troops. He gave orders to arrest and court-martial Generals York and Massenbach¹ and at the same time renewed his protestations of fidelity to the Emperor.²

¹ Christian Massenbach, born at Schmalkalden (Hesse-Cassel) in 1768, died at Bialystock, November 27, 1827, Quartermaster-General commanding the cavalry of the Prussian contingent under the command of York. Massenbach, who had been at Tilsit, did not hesitate to follow York. (Clausewitz, *La campagne de 1812*, 193.)

² "In the absence of other information the Prussian Government considers that it should follow the line of conduct that has been observed up to the present, and considers the act of York as that of an insubordinate soldier." (D'Ussel, *La defection de la*

But it was easy to see that the conduct of Prussia would depend on the success of the Russians and the secret plans of Austria. The solution to the problem lay in the attitude Austria would adopt; according to the Emperor she was the nearest to the menace of the Russian Colossus and consequently ought to rise in arms *en masse*. The Emperor kept on repeating this to me as though trying to make himself believe it. In any case, the disposition of intelligent opinion in France reassured him as to the outcome of all the plans that were afoot. He enumerated with complaisance all the means that he would have at his disposal in three months' time, calculating that he would be able to reckon on 800,000 under arms. Once this number had been realized, with the certainty of arming and equipping them, and the rest being left to his genius, he was really convinced that he would recapture the empire of the world, reckoning on his good fortune and the prospects of what the future would bring forth.

Nevertheless, he realized the necessity of giving utterance to views of a pacific nature, as much to encourage the troops and tranquillize public opinion in France as to prevent Austria, and even more urgently Prussia, from taking any extreme steps. Feeling the need of gaining time the Emperor convoked a special Council¹ to which I was summoned as well as M. de Talleyrand. This last, the Arch-Chancellor, Duke Decrès and I, were for open overtures to Austria, who had already offered her services for the concluding of peace. The day before the Council I told the Emperor that it would be necessary to agree

Prusse, 155.) On January 4, 1813, the King of Prussia sent Prince Hatzfeld to Paris to express "To His Majesty the Emperor the King's sentiments and to prove to Europe what those sentiments were." By a letter to Murat the King announced to the French army that he was dismissing York and giving the command of his troops to General Kleist.

¹ This Council was held at the Tuileries at 8 o'clock on January 3rd. It consisted of Caulaincourt, Talleyrand, Cambacérès, Duroc, Maret, Champagny and the two Councillors of State for Foreign Affairs, La Besnardière and d'Hauterive. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1813*, I, 131.)

with Austria at once as to the lines on which a general peace could be established, stipulating what demands would be made for offering compensations in the event of peace only applying to the Continental Powers. Moderation such as this, I told him, will keep the alliance of Austria and may even lead to peace itself; it was also calculated to please Austria and restore confidence in everyone. The Emperor, on the contrary, could see in such a course of action nothing but an avowal of weakness that would make us appear in a more embarrassed situation than we really found our selves, thereby not only rendering Russia more exigent in her demands but at the same time increasing the pretensions Austria would put forward if she thought us really embarrassed.

When the Council met, these questions were put before it in the most ambiguous manner. Only the most insignificant documents were read. As it was a matter of indifference to the Emperor if the discussion got excited or even if it passed any resolution, the talking was so general that it was difficult to get in a word. This Council was to no purpose in itself, but its composition was such as to give it the desired political effect. The *Moniteur* announced to Europe as well as to France that it had been summoned, and this was all the Emperor wanted. In the end, as was his custom, he acted on his own judgment and his ministers carried out his orders.

The Emperor thought he would be able to lull Austria with hopes of peace while he was hurriedly organizing his army. He imagined she might seize the opportunity to withdraw from the struggle, thereby obliging him to rely entirely on his own forces, and his foresight did not attempt to see further than this possibility. He was even doubtful whether Austria had enough strength of purpose to make the decision of withdrawing her contingent if she saw that he himself was taking vigorous measures. He stubbornly refused to believe that Austria might be more apprehensive of the Russians than of him, and was consequently far from admitting that she had the energy to declare herself his enemy.

After the dismissal of the Council it was long before the Emperor spoke to me on political matters, so I confined myself to the active reorganization of his carriage service. I succeeded in persuading him to alter the system of employing heavy wagons, both in the army and in his personal train, and changed the organization of artillery and service transports. He accordingly appointed a commission, with myself as one of the members, to consider the subject and we decided to make use of small wagons, known as "comtoises," fitted with tilts for the driver.¹

The winter passed in these activities. There was mourning in every family but hope in every heart, for the Emperor was in Paris and the preparations he was making inspired reassurance. The Court was very serious. The remnants of the army had retreated into Prussia and every succeeding courier brought news of some fresh retirement. Such men as had survived privations, rigours of climate, and dangers of warfare, as soon as they found themselves in easier circumstances fell sick from eating unwisely. The hospitals of Gumbinnen, Insterburg, Königsberg, Marienburg and Thorn were full of these unfortunates. It was the same with the horses as with the men; they were made as ill by abundance as they had been by dearth. The Emperor's saddle-horses, of which only four or five had been lost during the whole retreat, diminished in numbers sensibly after leaving Gumbinnen. Even horses of the Emperor's rank,² which were therefore the best tended and seemed in good condition, fell dead on the march. In less than a fortnight twenty chargers were lost.³ The cavalry and artillery suffered the heaviest

¹ Cf. Napoleon to Lacuée, Fontainebleau, January 25, 1813 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19504, on the reorganization of military vehicles): "Comtoise vehicles are light and, in a word, such as we had in the last campaign."

² Those destined to be ridden by the Emperor.

³ The saddle-horses of the Emperor were organized in ten brigades of thirteen horses each, in addition to which there were two battle-chargers and one horse for the Emperor's recreation. A statement of the Emperor's saddle-horses present with the army on January 31, 1813, countersigned by Baron de Saluces at Posen

losses. Even men of the Emperor's household fell ill of malignant fever.

The Prince of Neuchâtel, a chronic invalid, insisted on returning to Paris and the Emperor gave his consent. It can have afforded the Prince but little consolation to know that he had been partly responsible for giving the command of the army to the King of Naples to whom, in common with everyone else, he attributed a great part of our misfortunes. He told me this with the utmost frankness on his return to Paris. The Viceroy, on the other hand, was indefatigable. Always in the midst of his troops, he encouraged them and succeeded in rallying the scattered remnants of the army. Confidence began to be born anew. Neither France nor the brave fellows who fought her battles will ever forget that this young hero never despaired of his country or the army that had been entrusted to him, or that he stayed with it in the midst of contagion and paved the way for our victories in the spring.

While these things were happening in Germany, Austria was anxious to profit by anything that might lead to peace without compromising her with the Emperor; her first principal object was to get the Russians out of her territories, then to dispense with furnishing a contingent of troops and supporting the Poles who, relying on the Austrian army, had retreated on Cracow where they were indulging in dreams of the independence of their country and imbuing the Galicians with similar notions. Observing that the Emperor was getting ready, and that in consequence something had to be

on that date, and preserved in the Caulaincourt archives, indicates that thirty-two horses had been taken to Russia for the Emperor, which included two more than establishment. At that date twenty-two still remained in the army. These were Coquet, Lutzelberg, Zaire, Emir, Louve, Tauris, Judith, Madrid, Vineux (very much enfeebled by the campaign), Licorne, Turcoman, Roitelet, Leonore, Moscow, Warsaw, Gonzalve, Jardinère, Montevideo, Curde, Cid (very tired), Embelli, Pincon. One horse had been sent back to Paris, Pimpant. On January 31, 1813, nine had died between Moscow and Posen, Hector, Courtois, Bavafois, Favorite, Friedland, Gentille, Leopold, Javotte, Linotte.

done, as he was only trying to gain time till he could decide the matter by force of arms, Austria followed up her original overtures for peace by sending Count Bubna¹ to sound His Majesty's feelings and find out his views as to a general or a continental peace.

In the meantime Count Narbonne went to Vienna as French ambassador.² The Emperor thought that his name, his manners and his relations with Prince Schwarzenberg and Count Metternich would ensure a good reception for him, and that his intelligence would please the Emperor of Austria. It was also hoped that he would be able to change in our favour the unfriendly attitude that society in Vienna had adopted towards us. But the Austrians regretted M. Otto³ and were displeased at his being recalled, especially when they saw that the new ambassador brought with him nothing more positive or conducive to peace than his predecessor had offered. At Paris the Emperor expressed a wish to see Prince Schwarzenberg, with whom, he said, he could soon come to an agreement on every point. The Cabinet in Vienna had already called up men and was still doing so. Not reckoning that we should be ready so soon, they thought to gain time and be prepared; and not understanding that there were many things that could not be communicated to them by M. de Bubna or M. de Narbonne, the Austrian Government did not hurry itself to send Prince Schwarzenberg; when at last he did arrive he was greatly astonished to find the Emperor on the point of departure.⁴

¹ Ferdinand, Count Bubna de Littitz, born at Zamersk (Bohemia) on November 26, 1768, died at Milan, June 6, 1825, Chamberlain to the Emperor of Austria and Field-Marshal Lieutenant. He had his first audience with the Emperor on December 31, 1812.

² Narbonne was appointed Ambassador to Vienna, March 5, 1813.

³ Louis Guillaume Otto de Mosloy, born at Korj (Grand Duchy of Baden), August 7, 1754, died at Paris, November 9, 1817, had been Ambassador at Vienna since 1809.

⁴ Prince Schwarzenberg arrived in Paris April 7th and had his first audience with the Emperor on the 9th.

He was received by His Majesty, had long interviews with him and the Duke of Bassano, and left Paris with nothing, but vague words. In his turn he would have committed himself no further had not the Duke of Bassano provoked him beyond endurance in the course of a private conversation, by representing Austria as faithless and even dishonoured in taking advantages of our reverses and the state of embarrassment we were supposed to be in, to break the alliance and shatter the good relations that had been established by the marriage. Prince Schwarzenberg had been pressed by the Emperor and by the Duke of Bassano to express himself openly and say outright if the alliance still held good and if he could count on the contingent being furnished. In turn, he tried to make us state our positive views as to a continental or general peace; but the ambiguity of the answers he received and, even more definitely, the haste of the Emperor's departure, made it clear to him that he wanted to settle these points by force of arms before the enemy should reach the banks of the Rhine, and that above all else we wanted to put off any mediation on the part of his Court, as that mediation would, inevitably destroy the alliance.

In the private conversation to which I alluded, Prince Schwarzenberg did not hesitate to answer the Duke of Bassano's taunts by saying that the interests of the States of Austria, their future, the happiness and tranquillity of the entire world demanded supreme sacrifices,¹ and that if the peace of Europe depended on a marriage being annulled, Austria would not hesitate to annul it. He told the Emperor that in any case the contingent would be at his disposal. He ought, in strict truth, to have added the words "at the present moment," as the armistice concluded with the Russians, besides being for a definite period,² stipulated for notice of its

¹ Cf. Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Revolution Française*, VIII, 81.

² An allusion to the Armistice of Zeyes, signed on January 30, 1815, between Schwarzenberg and the Russians; but Caulaincourt is wrong in speaking of a definite period mentioned in this Armistice, for it was concluded for an unlimited term. Cf. Martens, *Recueil des traites*, III, 89.

denunciation, and Austria had no reason to fear that the Emperor could dispose of the contingent at the moment. She had time to decide and declare her intentions in the interval that would elapse between the denunciation of the armistice and the renewal of hostilities. The cabinet had already decided to withdraw the contingent for the Emperor's service, but as he was unable to make any use of it the Court of Vienna judged it better to wait and fit in with his plans.

The Emperor listened to this and very justly retorted that it was only the handing over of the contingent that gave colour to the alliance in the eyes of Europe. He was desirous, therefore, of keeping it at all costs, anyhow in appearance; but it was precisely this appearance that we lacked and in that, probably, lay the cause of our inability to obtain those frank explanations which would no doubt have led us to moderate our demands until a basis of peace were possible.

If Austria had spoken up more firmly during the winter, the Emperor, who had always desired to see her irresolute and deceived as to his real intentions, would have been more moderate in his proposals the more she was threatening in her attitude. He was only belligerent because he thought that a victory would range Austria on his side. Partly from weakness and partly because her armament was not yet complete, Austria desired to gain time. That was also the Emperor's object, but in his case it was to make use of their army. No one was entirely deceived. The Emperor, certain of a successful issue, reckoned that in the event of a reverse it would not be to Austria's interest to make her position worse. So he felt himself able to try the luck of war, for he ought to have good chances of success by being early on the battlefield. He realized, moreover, that we needed a victory to wipe out our defeat and enable us to hold once more the language proper to the might of France.

Our new army corps were formed. Bodies of troops had already crossed the Rhine;¹ the remnants of the army of

¹ A hundred cohorts of the National Guard were organized in 1812.

Russia, rallied and reorganized, were nevertheless obliged to retreat before forces that increased in strength with every day that passed. But our own strength was also on the increase. The Emperor's impending departure had been announced since March and it became increasingly necessary as the enemy, already master of Dresden,¹ was on the Saale by the time the Emperor could avail himself of all the means that France had placed at his disposal with so lavish a hand. Only the Guard had a few squadrons at full strength; the rest of our cavalry was at the base, except for a few weak detachments formed of conscripts who had been mounted while still on the march and debouched at Mayence. As for the infantry, there were a few bodies of men who had been left in France and had served the colours for a year or so, the remainder were fresh from their villages. The best trained had been issued with muskets a month previously, but the greater number had only been armed since their march to Mayence, that is, between twenty-four hours and a week. Many only received their muskets when they got to Erfurt or upon the road on the day before the Battle of Lützen.

The Emperor had left Paris on April 15th,² and stayed in Mayence until the 25th,³ to send forward such troops as had arrived, to organize and arrange for the supply of such stores as were lacking. He would have liked to have had another fortnight in order to collect the cavalry and instil a little discipline and spirit into the troops, but this was impossible as the men were sent forward in successive detachments of a hundred as the depots sorted and clothed them. As they crossed the Rhine our men were nothing but an organized mob. But the advance of the Prusso-Russian forces which

¹ Reynier's Corps, pressed by Wittgenstein, evacuated Dresden on March 26th.

² Napoleon set out from Saint Cloud at 4 o'clock in the morning of Thursday, April 15th.

³ The Emperor reached Mayence at midnight April 16th-17th, and left there at 8 o'clock in the evening of the 24th for Erfurt by way of Frankfort.

threatened the Rhine, where they hoped to arrive before we were in strength to prevent them, gave the Emperor no time for deliberation. He marched on the enemy with an army composed of officers and privates who had not so much as set eyes on one another forty-eight hours previously, of sergeants and corporals who had only been given their stripes the evening before, and with them won the Battle of Lützen.¹

¹ May 2, 1813.

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